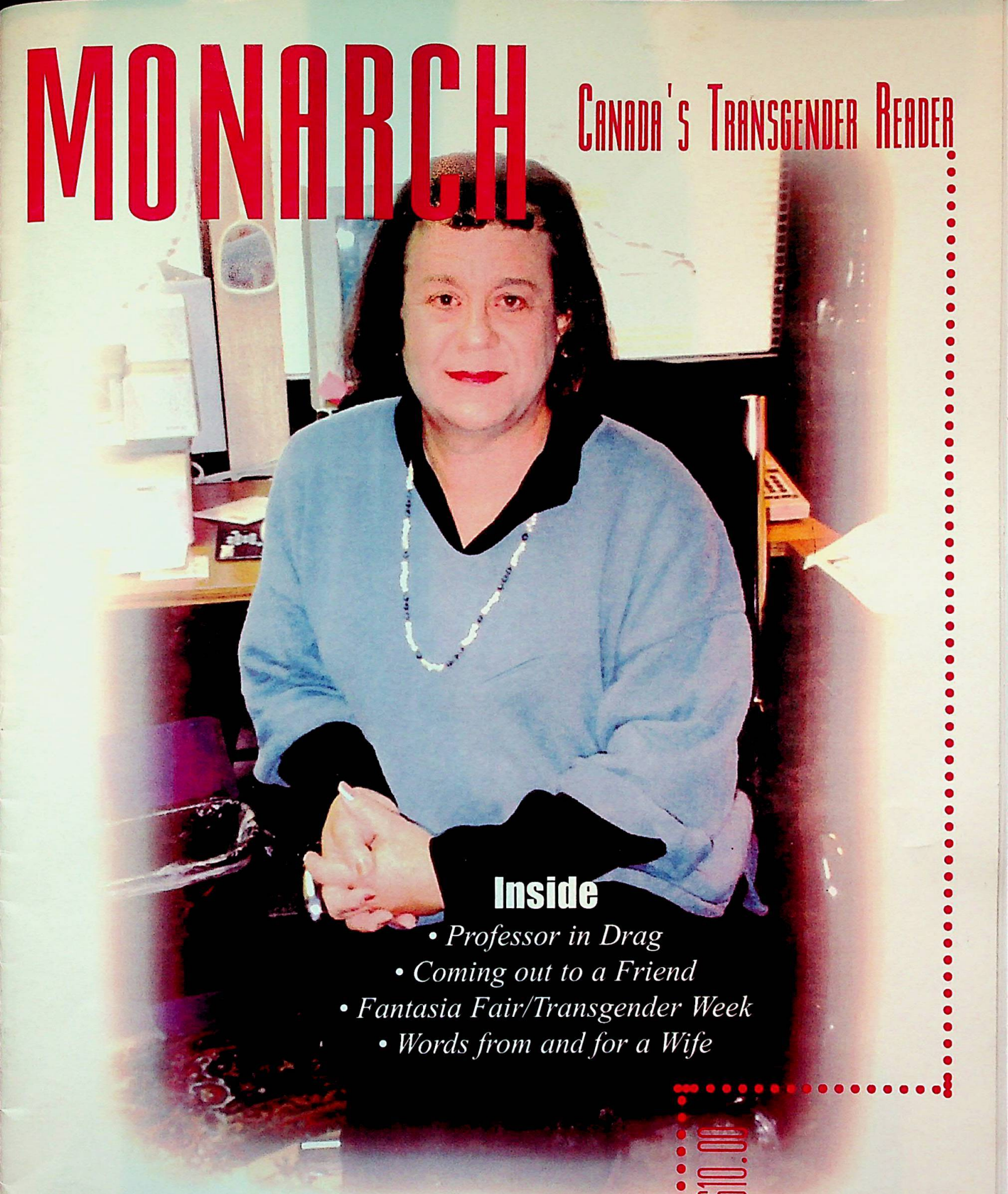
MONARCH

Canada's Transgender Reader



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- *Words from and for a Wife*

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ISSUE 51

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Editorial

Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, Ph.D.

Come On Out

Most of us are occasionally inclined to indulge in a fantasy about what the world would be like without the gender rules that currently govern it so tightly. According to the rules you are born and live in the gender determined by your birth sex and do not cross over during your lifetime. You do not identify with the "opposite" sex, yearn to be one, wear their clothes, adopt their mannerisms, consciousness, style or values. If you do so you will be condemned, ostracized, ridiculed, and possibly beaten or murdered. Even if you are born with ambiguous genitalia you will be assigned to one or the other of the two official sexes and expected to toe the line and follow the rules of the group to which you were assigned. The penalties for violating the gender rules, whether you are going MtF or FtM are severe.

The fantasy world in which we indulge, however, has no such rules. In that world gender is liberated from strict determination. In its narrowest form people are simply allowed to choose what gender they want to be, and then assisted in changing is it is so required. There is no disapproval, no requirements, surgery is optional, and you are just considered someone who's made a basic but natural life choice. Going further, we can go so far as to imagine a world in which gender is fluid, a world in which gender choices might be made each day, hour or minute. This world is one in which gender is not thought to be something that is inexorably imbued in your psyche at birth, but rather is something flexible and adoptable. In this world you could spend half your life, ten per cent or your life, or most of your life in one gender without giving up the other. You might even mix and match. People would not be men or women, but people who may or may not be more or less masculine and feminine.

Now the amazing thing is that such a world could exist. We could live in a world in which gender variation was not considered only slightly better than pedophilia. What is required is something that is, in fact, currently under way, and that is a process called de-sensitization which is itself a requirement for normalization. De-sensitization happens when people become used to things because they are around all the time. The gay world has been using de-sensitization in a slow and incremental way to go from being deeply closeted to starring on TV sitcoms. Eventually, de-sensitization results in normalization where people don't seem to care if someone is gay or straight—and we're not anywhere near that yet.

De-sensitization depends on two main factors for its success, and the second requires the first which is coming out, going public, being yourself in an open and honest way. By being out and publicly acknowledging your cross dressing and/or transgender nature you create a familiarity that makes it easier for the next person. Now, the people you've come out to have to admit that they know someone who's transgendered, most likely someone they know and respect. If that's the case, how bad can it be? I mean, they have to say something like, "I know this guy Jack who sometimes pretends he's Jill, and he's an all right sort of guy." When next they hear of someone who dresses or is going into transition they take it in stride.

When I first came out it was originally to close friends, then to family, and finally to everyone. In the early days one acquaintance had been out on the West Coast and heard about my dressing. He returned and, thinking he had a real hot item, told another mutual friend here in Toronto. "Oh, yeah," said that friend to whom I had come out ages ago, "I know all about that. Big deal, it's old news." By being out I had defused the ability of someone else to out me. Every time you come out to someone you are teaching that being transgendered is normal, routine and OK.

I know many people in our community, and especially among the cross dressers, being closeted to one degree or another is the norm. The reasons vary, but the underlying fact is that most cross dressers do not need to come out. If you are happy with the limitations placed on you by your personal closet, then the need to come out does not seem so great. The real or imagined threats to family, jobs, promotions, reputations and self-image are sufficient to compel you to accept what you have and not try for more. This frequently means not changing at home and being forced to find someplace to change into and out of your femme mode. It means having to prevaricate when asked what you did on a weekend when you went to a club dinner and then out to the bars. It means not dressing in your own home, lying to your children and family. And many people are willing to live with these limitations: unlike a transsexual who must, at some point or other, go public in order to maintain her/his sanity, the cross dresser always has the choice.

The choice the cross dresser has ought be considered carefully. For one thing, the risks and consequences should be assessed realistically and not fantastically. By a large margin the coming out experiences of most who have come out has been more positive then negative. More often then not, people don't care what you do on your own time. But every time you do come out, to your SO, to you family, to your friends, you are bringing that fantasy world a little bit closer. Every time you share your real self in all its complexity and gender diversity with a friend you are coming closer to personal honesty and growth as well as educating someone about gender diversity.

In the final analysis the choice is ours. When we come out we can engage in political action, organize and begin to de-sensitize the world to gender diversity. The world in which you can wake up and see how you feel each morning before choosing trousers or a skirt will not be here in our lifetimes. But it will never be here if we don't just try to extend ourselves that little bit, try to be as much as we can all the time.

In This Issue

Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, Ph.D.

The theme of this issue is Coming Out, and many of the stories and articles in here reflect that issue. We have several stories written by members about coming out to family or SOs. Lynne McCardle (one of TMR's editors) write about telling her girlfriend DL about her transgender nature, and DL has been kind enough to write about her reactions. Lyn, your favorite fashion consultant, tells a charming tale of coming out to a friend without warning. Willow's story is told to us in a newspaper article and is about coming out in the relatively small town of Kelwona BC.

There are also some interesting tales of well known figures who have come out to great public response. You will have no doubt heard and read about the Canadian Armed Forces sergeant Sylvia Durand who is transitioning while in the service. Well, we have a partial transcript of her interview with Arlene Bynon on Studio 2. An article about the physician and tennis player Renée Richards is reprinted here from Tennis Magazine, and another about the internationally renown economist Deirdre [previously Donald] McCloskey is here as well. Just in case famous academics don't excite you all that much, we've a follow up on the famous Israeli pop star Dana International and an article about the world renown pianist Sarah [previously David] Beuchner.

And then there's me. I blushingly confess that I figure large in this issue. Not only have I finally fulfilled my life-long ambition of being a cover girl, but in addition to my usual editorial, there's no fewer than two piece about me, but at least one includes stories abou others! . I'm afraid that's what happens when you are an out cross dresser. Finding transsexuals who are willing to be interviewed and go public is easy, but cross dressers are another story all together as you'll read in my piece, TV TV.

There's more. We have another article about the woes of Sos by E. Fenton, and a piece on next October's Fantasia

Fair/Transgender Week by Dallas Denny . There's also a nice assortment of fashion

tips, oddities and quirks, science and news of the world. So, sit back and enjoy issue #51, and make sure your subscription or dues are not running out.

TGC-L: Canada's TG Email Listserv

TGC-L, which stands for "Transgender Canada Listserv," is a private list devoted to the discussion of issues pertinent to the Canadian Transgendered community. TGC-L understands issues pertinent to the transgendered community in a broad sense. Issues ranging from political and medical matters, family difficulties, all the way to shopping trips and tips are welcome. While TGC-L is unofficially connected to Xpressions , it does not have a particular viewpoint, and all opinions are welcome. We urge members to be polite, considerate and supportive. Flames and personal attacks will not be tolerated, and abusive subscribers will be dropped.

TGC-L is in its fifth year of operation and currently has over 150 subscribers including members of the CD, TS, and FtM community. Anyone interested in subscribing should send a message to:

Listserv@YorkU.ca

containing the single line:
SUBSCRIBE TGC-L "Your Name"

Of course, put your real, femme or guy name in for "Your Name." (You must use a first name and last name or initial.)

The message will be bounced to a list administrator who will contact you immediately. If you want to be safely anonymous, go to one of the free web based email sites that offer an email address and use that. These sites include www.Canada.com, www.yahoo.com, www.hotmail.com and many others.

Smalls

Car Accident

Leslie Re'Geanne, 44, was struck and killed by a car March 24, around noon at 47th and Greenview. Police are looking for witnesses to the incident, which took the life of a much-loved local transgendered performer.

[GAIN News - 3/31/99]

Gambling on Fairness

Transgender activists continue to work to raise awareness regarding the need for transgender persons to be included in non discrimination policies and legislation in Nevada.

[GAIN News - 3/31/99]

Don't it Make you GLAAD!

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) presented awards at the New York ceremony of the 10th Annual GLAAD Media Awards.

At the ceremony, GLAAD honored RuPaul with the organization's Vito Russo Entertainer Award. Each year, the award is presented to an openly lesbian or gay individual who has achieved excellence in a specific area of media and has furthered the visibility and understanding of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community through her/his work. RuPaul is an internationally recognized recording star, former talk show host, author and actor. For the past four years, RuPaul has acted as Co-Chair of the M*A*C AIDS Fund, which has raised more than $15 million for AIDS charities to date.

[GAIN News - 3/31/99]

THE CHAR LADY

Donna Wells

From the Chair.....

Well the year has gone quickly as we move into another beautiful fall season. The summer was hot for the girls who got out and enjoyed it. Those hot sunny days are always a good test for the make-up, aren't they?

We were very pleased with our success, your support and the support from the community, for our fund-raising dinner, at the 519 Community Centre, the end of May. The Xpression's organization raised $1500.00, which was donated to the 519 Community Centre on that evening. The Community Centre will use these monies in support of the 'Meal-Trans' programme, along with other programmes they operate for the local community. A special thanks to those who gave additional monies, extra effort and to all whom attended this event. We all had a good time and were able to help with a great cause! Special letters of thanks were sent out to contributing members, who donated additional monies, to Gatsby's who donated the pasta, Byzantium, who baked and donated the bread and to Lynne who performed miracles in the kitchen (and whos owes me the recipe for the secret sauce). HERE, HERE!

The canceling of our fall event was not a happy decision, but Divine Lake Resort took the position that they wanted a financial commitment for a minimum of 25 – 30 gals and we were not prepared to allocate club funds to them, based on our past experience. The other known fact is that many of our gals attend Fantasia Fair, in Provincetown, MA, the week of October 17th, 1999 (this year), which is quite an expense, by itself. To do attend both our Fall Fling & 'P-town' (that's what Fantasia Fair is called), does require a heavy cash outlay, i.e. a very expense exercise. As a result, many of our gals are faced with an either/or decision. As we do loose a number of members to this 'P-town' event, it reduces the available numbers for our Fall Fling. This thinking was all part of our decision to cancel our Fall Fling this year.

But, the good news is that we have converted our Christmas dinner evening into a full Christmas weekend, i.e. Thursday through Sunday, December 2nd through December 5th. Wow, are we going to have fun in Toronto on this weekend! Christmas outings, Christmas shopping, a few learning workshops, Saturday night's Gala banquet & Christmas show and finishing up with a brunch on Sunday morning! What a super weekend of fun we have planned for you! You've got to come out to this one! Whether you are fresh 'out-of-the-closet', or a veteran cross-dresser, this will be a great weekend to attend. We have negotiated with the Colony Hotel, a rate of $59.00 a day, from Thursday through Saturday! Come-on girls, this is $59.00 a day in downtown Toronto, steps from the Eaton's Centre, at Christmas time! We are talking a fantastic room rates here! Further, this is the third year at the Colony Hotel and they love us! Last year we sat close to ninety (90) gals for the Christmas dinner and they all had a hoot! You do want to attend this one, and this year it's a whole weekend of fun!

The monthly dinners continue to be an opportunity for all of us to meet and have fun together each month. We have intentionally arranged the dinners on, or around the Church street strip, to offer some of the 'newer-out-of-the-closet' and our newer members, a higher comfort level. The Church Street area is totally accepting of the cross-dressing scene and many of the 'Queens' wander about dressed en-femme too. Any members who have not yet ventured out to one of our monthly dinners, due to a lack of comfort in the great outdoors, please do come out. The Church Street area is totally accepting, or 'cool' as my son says. You will have a wonderful time.

We are currently on the verge of launching our 'Big Sisters Programme', which will help some of our members who have not yet ventured out, by matching them with an experienced member for the evening. The 'Big Sister' can meet you somewhere, help you with make-up, help you to decide what-to-wear and will accompany you to the dinner. So, if you would like to attend a dinner, but are not quite comfortable doing so, please call our main telephone number and request a 'Big Sister'. Leave your name, telephone number and a short message. Come-on out! You'll have a ball!

Donna Wells, your 'Char-Lady'

Coming Out to a friend

by Lyn

I had decided to share "Lyn" in all her glory, to one of my straight male friend's casual girlfriend. She and I have been friends for a couple of years and had cultivated a good friendship. In passing she had made a comment, "someday I'll share my secrets of living abroad with you." I mentioned that maybe I would do the same some day, and a few weeks ago the day came.

So why did I tell her? I guess I had a few reasons. Firstly, and very selfishly, I was curious to see if she had any idea, or if my male friend had mentioned anything to her, and secondly, I really like her and with her theatrical background, I felt that she would be very accepting of my way of life.

She had just purchased a new home and we decided to meet after she was finished work on Friday for a celebratory drink. I decided to go as Lyn. I took care in dressing and decided to wear something very casual, as I guessed she would be in jeans. I wore black jeans and a brown twin set and set off to meet her.

I parked and spotted her on the patio of the restaurant and made my way over to her. I must admit that I was a little nervous as I approached and said, "Excuse me ma'am, is this seat taken?" She just replied that she was waiting for a friend. I sat down, took my sunglasses off and said "Joyce, it's Stan."

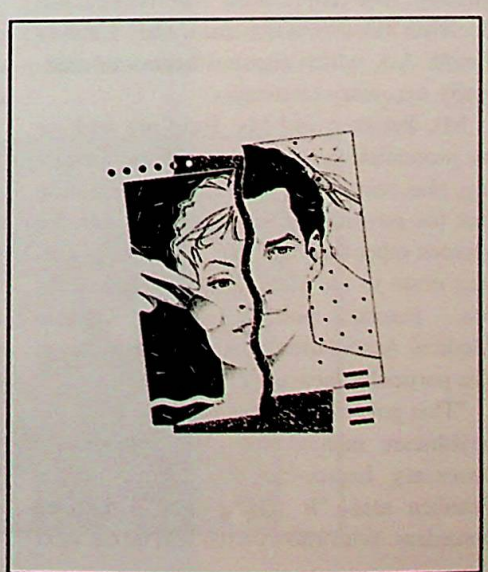
She looked at me, sat back and said, "Oh my gawd," and gave me one the most beautiful smiles I have ever been offered.

I wish I could have captured the look on her face and her exuberant response. It was befitting a Hollywood movie. All she could manage at first was "Stan", and I told her that my friends call me Lyn when I am like this. We started chatting about the usual questions: why, when and how did you first start and does your wife know. She kept saying that she had no idea and telling me how beautiful I looked. The best compliment was that I looked better than most of her girlfriends.

We chatted away and funny enough, most of our conversation revolved around the purchase of her home. I knew by this that she was very comfortable with my tgism and off we went to dinner at Cantine on Avenue Rd. Some of the information that she gave to me about myself and my community was the fresh set of eyes that she had on who and what we are. I mentioned the term "passing" and she wanted to know what that was. I defined it for her and she said that she had not notice anyone looking at me seeing anything other than a gal. I thanked her for her kindness but suggested that she observe the room as I walked to the ladies room. Upon my return, she said that no one looked at me in any unusual way. I saw that she was saying if there was an issue of passing it was within me. Another thing I learned was that most people, even those in a creative environment have little if any information about tgism.

As we drove home she continued with very good questions. I won't share my answers with you but ask you to answer them. If you were single, would you take your tgism further? Do you feel more comfortable as a boy or as a girl? Do you find the transition back and forth painful? How did your family take the news when you came out to them?

In the end it was a very positive experience and on the way home she said something that made my heart smile. "I can't believe it, I am relating to you as a woman. I feel so much more comfortable with you this way"



Smalls....

Amnesty International Addresses LGBT

The first international meeting of Amnesty International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) human rights activists was held in London in the last weekend of March, 1999. In all, 47 activists from 25 different countries came together representing LGBT groups in all five continents.

The meeting agreed a world-wide strategy for combating LGBT human rights abuses including the formation of an LGBT international coordinating committee within Amnesty International to highlight those abuses. Francisco Olivera from Argentina said, "Amnesty International can enhance the human rights of thousands of lesbian and gay Argentinians and those from other developing nations. This meeting represents a major step forward in the status of LGBT human rights across the world."

[GAIN News - 3/31/99]

There's Something about Maryland

The Maryland House of Delegates has stripped all transgender language from proposed anti-discrimination and hate crimes bills. The amended versions, without gender protections, have already been voted on in the full House and have passed with an overwhelming majorities.This is the first legislation in Maryland submitted to the state legislature, of any type, that has included both sexual orientation and gender language.

[GAIN News - 4/1/99]

Smalls....

Another TG Death

Tracy Thompson, a 33-year-old transgendered woman died after being beaten to death in Wilcox County in the heart of rural Georgia. Authorities are investigating the beating as a possibly hate-motivated crime.

Severely beaten and bleeding from head wounds, Tracey walked the half-mile from the site of the incident to a nearby farmhouse before she lost consciousness. She died later that day at an Albany, GA hospital.

[GAIN News - 4/1/99]

Gender Bender Fender

As of 4-30 PM April 1st 1999 in the State of Western Australia is a White Subaru 4-wheel-drive with the registration plates bearing the genetic code of '47 XXY'. The first publicly declared androgynous person to visit Antarctica owns the vehicle. S/he was the first to fly both the specially designed and produced 'Epicene' flag (sponsored by Channel Nine's Sixty Minutes) and the 'International Rainbow' flag which have both been to the South Pole and the highest mountain in Antarctica.

"To be seen is to exist" - This little gesture by Chris Somers who is 'androgynous identifying' always ends her/his signature and name with 'xxy'. S/he hopes it will help further in alerting people to the beauty of difference and diversity for the whole community here and everywhere, whomsoever we may be.

[GAIN News - 4/1/99]

TS OHIP Challenge

by Alexandra Gill, The Globe and Mail

ONTARIO DECISION TO HALT SEX-CHANGE SURGERY PAYMENTS CHALLENGED

Transsexual's court case seeking immediate reinstatement of financing argues the government's move to end it blatantly discriminates

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Alexandra Gill

The Globe and Mail

Toronto—Michelle Josef, a 45-year-old Toronto transsexual, and Cynthia Petersen, the lawyer who successfully represented the rape victim known as Jane Doe, are taking the Ontario government to court in a potentially precedent-setting case over a decision last fall to stop financing sex-change surgery.

"This will be the first time the courts have been forced to look at the Charter [of Rights and Freedoms] to see if the protections there cover the transsexual community," Ms. Petersen said yesterday, adding that she decided to take on the case because she believes the government's decision was "blatantly discriminatory."

On Oct. 2, the Harris government announced that it would no longer cover the costs of gender-reassignment surgery, which the Ontario Health Insurance Plan had paid for since 1969.

The notice of application, filed in Ontario Superior Court (the former General Division) two weeks ago, argues that the decision discriminates against transsexuals on the basis of sex, disability and gender identity. The application asserts that the decision also contravenes the Canada Health Act, which requires access to medically necessary treatments.

Ms. Petersen and Ms. Josef are seeking an immediate reinstatement of the financing, plus costs. They also want a declaration that the government acted in bad faith, for reasons other than the ostensible one of cutting costs to the Health Insurance Act. As Ms. Petersen pointed out, the Ontario Medical Association was not consulted on this particular measure.

"This government is essentially axing the health-care budget and cutting medically necessary health-care procedures," Ms. Petersen said. "It sets a very dangerous precedent. Who knows what will be cut next and how they're making those decisions?"

Rolling with the punches wasn't an option for Ms. Josef, who was once known as Bohdan Hluszko. She argues that although it would be much cheaper for her to lay out $28,000 for surgery and be done with it, she is fighting this issue on principle. An award-winning drummer who has played with Prairie Oyster, Jann Arden and David Wilcox, Ms. Josef was one of countless transsexuals who were caught in the middle of her transition from man to woman when the funds stopped.

Two years ago, she joined a support group at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry's Gender Identity Clinic (one of three in the country) and began an intensive "Real-Life" program, in which transsexuals are required to undergo psychiatric counselling, change their names, begin hormone therapy and live in their chosen gender role full-time for two consecutive years. Ms. Josef has since spent nearly $30,000 on cosmetic surgery, including breast implants and an abdominal tuck, for which the government has never paid.

In Ontario, approximately 11 patients are approved for sex-change surgery each year, to the tune of about $120,000 each. Ontario Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer has said that money has been reassigned for cardiac care. A spokesman for Ms. Witmer said yesterday that she is not willing to comment on the case now that it's before the courts.

Citing studies that show transsexuals are less dependent on health and social services after sex-change surgery, Ms. Josef argued, "This is a short-sighted decision that will cost society more in the long run. [The government] took a medical issue and politicized it."

Robert Evans, a University of British Columbia professor and health-care analyst, says the political price of funding sex-change surgery is one that society—or a government—might not be willing to pay.

"The question of medical necessity," he remarked, "is open to interpretation. You can't allow it to be judged solely by the person in question or the health practitioner. So if you were looking for some sort of basis for what is medically necessary, you have to look for some kind of community consensus."

It's a Bust - Just For You!

IT'S A BUST – JUST FOR YOU!

[This ad was found on the web. It is from the same company that makes what are considered among the best hip and tush pads. It is presented here for interest.]

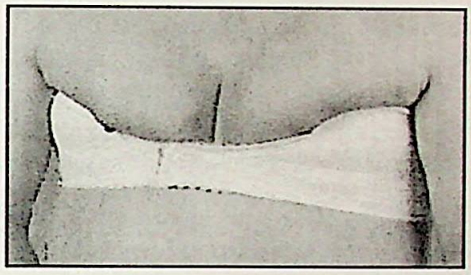
The Diva bust-enhancing bra by Classic Curves REAL CLEAVAGE with DIVA !

Well, you've got your Veronicas for your hips and rear, and breastforms for your bustline...is there anything else you can do to improve the femininity of your body shape? How would you like to have REAL CLEAVAGE?

Up until now, there were only 3 ways to get real cleavage—hormones, implants or tape. Hormones mean that you'll be feminine-looking 24 hours a day, for the rest of your life (unless and until you get breast reduction surgery).The same holds true for breast implants.

It's possible to get realistic-looking cleavage by using tape and make-up, but this technique is extraordinarily difficult to master. Our model, Sarah, is an expert at using this procedure. Creating cleavage used to take her a MINIMUM of 30 minutes of prep time. She used 3 protective spray coatings, stick-on flexible bra cups, specialized tape, push-up pads, and a lot cutting and trimming! And it took her about a YEAR of experimentation, along with MONTHS of healing time, to get the large, nasty blisters she initially developed to disappear. And she STILL got blisters if she created cleavage for more than about 4 hours at a time!

FINALLY, with a sigh of relief, her situation has improved...NOW she uses DIVA!



Classic Curves International has introduced a FOURTH way to create cleavage...using our Diva breast-enhancing garment! The Diva is ingeniously designed to take the loose side and chest tissue you have now(and we've ALL got SOME) to temporarily create what appears to be absolutely real cleavage! (patent pending)

Worn UNDER your regular bra (with breast prosthetics), our Diva garments, combined with appropriate shading (using your current foundation and blushes),will give you a beautifully feminine appearance. No longer will you be limited to wearing "jewel" or "princess" necklines. Go dancing with a scoop-neck bodysuit on! Attend fancy parties wearing a slinky, low-cut cocktail dress! Your longer necklaces will now fall into your cleavage, just like they do for any genetic woman!

Diva is now available, in nude or black, for only US$45.95, plus shipping& handling.

CONTACT INFORMATION – if at all possible, go to their web site at, http://www.clcrv.com/Diva

Classic Curves International P.O. Box 115, Wilmington, CA, 90748, USA. Questions? voice/fax: 562-595-9148, Outside California call 888-898-8787, or e-mail: classicurv@aol.com

Smalls....

Transgender Day

According to a Kyodo News Service, the Japanese commemorative day association has designated April 4 as "transgender" day. The objective of this act is to promote public understanding of transgender.

According to the story, Japan's "support groups for transgenders and transsexuals have become more active since last October, when Japan's first legal sex change operation took place."

[GAIN News - 4/7/99]

Boys in Blue versus "Boys" in Skirts

San Francisco: a coalitiion of transpeople claimed recently that police officers and sheriff's deputies abuse them verbally on the street or in jail, calling the acts "systematic harassment."

Said Nadia Cabeza, "When I walk in the Tenderloin... I feel the police want to stop me because I am transgender," adding that police often presume she is a prostitute and arrest her erroneously.

Said Sahwna Virago, "We're seeing transgendered persons who are the victims of police brutality and the numbers are on the rise."

[GAIN News - 4/10/99]

We Outta be in Pictures

On Saturday, May 22nd, the first-ever Northwest Transgender Film Festival took place at the Evergreen State College, in Olympia,

Smalls....

WA, and featured films and speakers on transgender and intersexual issues, with discussions of race, class, and religion.

[GAIN News - 4/14/99]

Queens of England

The British Parliament announced the establishment of an interdepartmental working group to examine the status of trans people. This group was established to answer a question that was brought up in parliament.

[GAIN News - 4/17/99]

Women Behind Bars

A transsexual prisoner claims that she is being discriminated against by the Correctional Services of Canada. The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal will hear the complaint of Synthia Kavanagh, which alleges that she was discriminated against by being denied her requests for SRS.

Kavanagh, 37, began hormone therapy in her teens. She dresses and sounds like a woman, and claims that the policy of Canada's correctional authority which forbids inmates access to SRS is "grossly unfair and robs inmates of their gender identity," according to the story.

The tribunal is scheduled to hear the case later this spring, in Vancouver.

Kavanagh is serving a life term, according to the story, for murdering Lisa Black, Kavanagh's best friend, whom she murdered with 20 blows with a hammer. Black also was transgendered.

[GAIN News - 4/17/99]

His Debut as a Woman

By Andrew Jacobs

This week, after years of confusion, torment and hormone treatments, the concert pianist David Buechner performs for the first time as Sara. But the question remains, Will his fans and peers accept her?

By Andrew Jacobs

David Buechner darts around his Upper West Side apartment consumed by that prosaic ritual known as spring cleaning. Few domestic chores carry as much metaphoric heft - casting off winter's accumulated dust and detritus, embracing renewal and rebirth—but for the 39-year-old classical pianist, the task has been especially symbolic. Strewn beneath the Steinway grand that fills the living room are piles of tailored Italian suits, unassuming cashmere sweaters and a lifetime's worth of ties, all bound for the Salvation Army. In a newly purged closet, arranged according to hue, hang the season's latest acquisitions: a summery frilled blouse, a plum chiffon dress, a black Chanel gown and dozens of off-the-rack dresses. "I guess this is what they mean when they say 'coming out of the closet,'" cracks Buechner with a weary smile.

This week, when he plays a pair of Chopin concertos at Manhattan's Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, Buechner will not be wearing the traditional tails and a bow tie. Dressed in a white silk gown and matching pumps, hair flowing past the shoulders, the pianist will be introduced as Sara Davis Buechner, making him the nation's first concert pianist to undergo a mid-career sex change.

After three decades wrestling with his gender, bouts of heavy drinking, a failed marriage and flirtations with suicide, Buechner decided in 1996 to embrace his true self. Last year he began taking estrogen, plunged into a gruelling regimen of electrolysis and started to venture out dressed as a woman. "To me, the choice was simple," Buechner says. "Live as Sara or give up on living."

The winner of a dozen international piano competitions, Buechner has earned a place in the classical music world with an eclectic repertory, dizzying technical prowess and a flashy performing style that a British critic once described as "saucy." He has played solo with the world's most prestigious orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, the National Symphony in Washington, the Japan Philharmonic and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in England. He is also a prolific recording artist who has taken on the works of Mozart, Gershwin, Dvorak and the film composer Miklos Rozsa.

Although Buechner had hoped to control the timing of his public coming out, the rumor mill, churning at a furious pace, accelerated the process last spring and forced him to confront the thorny issues sooner than expected. Even those closest to him say they were completely unaware of his secret. Known for a vigorous—some might call it aggressive—playing style, a penchant for cigars and a devotion to the Yankees, Buechner was what one friend calls "a guy's guy," a wisecracking, back-slapping bon vivant who frequently had a pretty girl by his side. "When David told me what he was going to do, I just assumed he was joking and waited for the punch line," says his longtime manager Douglas Schwalbe. "Needless to say, it came as quite a shock." In retrospect, Buechner recognizes the hypermasculine behaviour as a way of masking feminine feelings, saying, "I was desperate trying to fit in, to play the role people expected."

Even in an age when drag queens like RuPaul achieve mainstream status and cross-dressing films like "Tootsie," "Mrs. Doubtfire" and "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert" win Academy Awards and public affection, Buechner's high-profile transformation is a decidedly risky one. As word of his gender reassignment spread through the close-knit classical music world, Buechner who now asks to be referred to as female, began to endure a string of rejections; seven universities turned her down for full-time positions, she claims, after learning they would be hiring Sara, not David. Her fall concert schedule, usually packed with appearances from Tampa to Sacramento, is thinner than usual. "Let's face it," says Joann Falletta, a friend who conducts the Buffalo Philharmonic, Virginia Symphony and Long Beach Symphony in California, "this is a conservative business based on 18th- and 19th- century traditions. I'm sure the boards who run America's orchestra's are ready for Sara."

Although few states or institutions pro-

hibit discrimination against transgendered people, those who decide not to hire Buechner say it had nothing to do with the sex change. "David Buechner is a brilliant pianist, but when you're talking about a tenured teaching position, there are other factors to consider," says Bernard Dobroski, dean of Northwestern University's School of Music. He declined to elaborate, citing the confidentiality of the selection process. Others simply refused to comment.

Some have hinted that Buechner's decision to orchestrate the coming out with the help of a publicist suggests an awareness of its career-boosting potential, a way of rising above the crowd. It is an accusation that fills her with rage. "Why would I ruin friendships and devastate my family for some dubious gain?" she says. "It just goes to show you how cynical and bitter the classical music world is" In fact, Buechner was so convinced her career would implode that she considered taking a teaching job at a Rumanian conservatory "until the bad press blows over."

To her surprise, however things have not been as disastrous as anticipated. Both New York University and the Manhattan School of Music, where Buechner teaches, agreed to keep her on, as did Yamaha, the company that provides her concert piano's in exchange for publicity. "As long as it doesn't affect his playing, it makes no difference to us," says Susan Davies Muhler, of Yamaha's artist services department.

If anything, Buechner says her playing has improved since she first sat at the keyboard a year ago dressed as Sara (a name she coveted since childhood). "I was emotionally tied up in knots and completely disconnected from what was coming out of the piano," she says. "Now when I play, I feel incredibly free, and I think that's reflected in the music." Moreover the paralyzing stage fright and bleeding ulcers have vanished since Sara came into being. Friends, too, say that Buechner seems happier than ever. "It's as if she has nothing left to prove," says Jens Nygaard, a longtime friend who conducts the Jupiter Symphony, based in New York. "The anguish seems to have been lifted."

Σ From the: The New York Times Magazine / September 13, 1998

LINGERIE FOR MEN

Do you like shopping? If you do, then you ought try out Body Aware, an e-commerce site specializing in Feminine lingerie made just for men. You'll notice from the accompanying pictures that the men in question are not dolled up. Could this be a new trend? Could we all be waltzing into Victor's Secret in the not too distant future. I hope so, but I wouldn't hold your breath, sister. You can check out and order from their web site at www.bodyaware.com

Smalls....

Strip Searching to Prove Gender

A San Francisco jury has awarded $755,000 in damages, to a transsexual who alleged that sheriff's deputies strip-searched her to confirm her gender.

According to the story, Victoria Schneider was arrested in 1996 "for investigation of prostitution," but she was never charged. Initially booked as a man, Schneider claimed she feared for her safety in an all-male cell. In order to determine her gender, a female deputy strip-searched Schneider and, she alleges, "city employees and other suspects jeered and laughed at her." However, Schneider said the strip search was not necessary, since deputies in the same jail had searched her after an arrest in 1993, and had determined that she was a woman. Though she asked jail officials to check their records, they refused.

[GAIN News - 4/17/99]

Miss Ouri

The Privacy Rights Education Project (PREP) made history on April 20, when they successfully lobbied the Missouri Senate to extend hate crimes protections to persons targeted because of their sexual orientation. The Senate passed the Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 328, which will add not only sexual orientation, but also sex and disability, the three new categories to the exist-

Smalls....

ing law, which currently covers hate crimes based on race, color, religion and national origin.

This was the first time ever that the Missouri Senate has passed legislation to recognize lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Missourians as a group deserving of the same protections offered people because of their race, religion or similar factors.

[GAIN News - 4/24/99]

Banking on Looks

On April 29,1999, Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders ("GLAD") filed suit against Park West Bank & Trust Company on behalf of Lucas Rosa, a transgendered individual who was denied a loan application by a bank teller because Rosa did not appear dressed in traditional male clothing.

According to GLAD attorney Jennifer Levi, who along with GLAD's Civil Rights Director Mary Bonauto filed the complaint, "The United States Supreme Court said in the 1989 case Hopkins v. Price Waterhouse that sex stereotyping is impermissible sex discrimination."

Plaintiff Rosa was born a biological male but often dresses in women's clothing and passes for female. The suit stems from an incident on July 21, 1998 when Rosa, dressed in female clothing including earrings, entered West Bank, in Holyoke, Massachusetts and requested a loan application. A West Bank loan officer asked

WILLOW SCULPTS A LIFE

By Don Plant
The Daily Courier, Kelowna BC

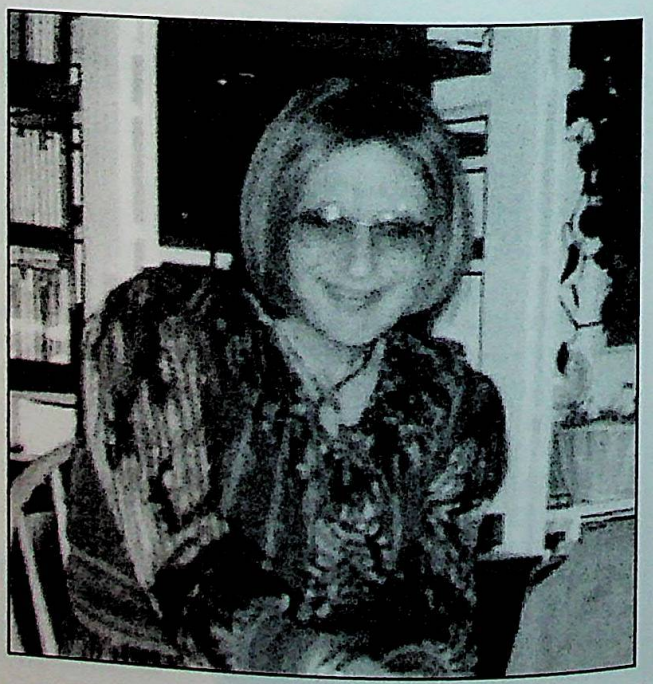
Meeting Willow Arune for the first time can be a little unsettling. After all, you don't have to look hard to realize there's a man inside the make-up, dress and heels. But Willow's easy manner and candour about her appearance put you at ease in seconds. This is no ordinary transsexual, if there is such a thing.

Willow, 52, has lived in Kelowna since June and is "in transition." She wants to undergo surgery to alter her male body, but first has to take female hormones for at least a year. She must also dress and behave as a woman to prepare psychologically for the operation. A former lawyer, entrepreneur and TV host, Willow decided last year to throw off the male persona and become the woman she wanted to be. When we met, she wore red nail polish, a fine-knit turtleneck with scarf, and gold earrings, necklace and bracelets. Her blond hair was combed down to her shoulders.

Willow moved to Kelowna in June and began work as a writer. She's likely the first transsexual anyone here has knowingly met. And so far, she's received no more attitude or abuse here than she'd get in Vancouver. "I expected all sorts of problems," she said in a low but effeminate voice. "Instead, I found a warmth and kindness. I've found many new friendships, and some in the most unexpected places."

On New Years Eve, Willow attended a wedding at First Baptist Church and the reception that followed. She was the only non-Baptist there. She braced herself for a few hostile stares or comments, but instead found everyone was "really kind."

She goes into local shops and frequents a local pub. She lay on the beach last summer wearing a woman's bathing suit with a skirt. Even though Kelowna is reputed to be a conserva-



tive Christian community, negative experiences have been rare.

One woman who interviewed her for a job ended the conversation when Willow revealed her story. Another time, a man said he "didn't have to put up with this @*&%@" and left when Willow walked into a coffee shop. Within a week, he spoke to her. A week later, they became acquaintances. For the most part, people accept her.

"It's being open, friendly and understanding," she said. "To a lot of people, what I'm doing is strange and they're afraid of it in one way or another."

Willow decided to reverse her gender after a harrowing two years as a man in Thailand. (S)he travelled there in 1995 to make a loan transaction with two Americans who authorities later learned had forged documents. All three were arrested, and Willow - then known as Will - spent six weeks in a Bangkok prison, where he was repeatedly raped by the guards. When he got out on bail, the Thai authorities withheld his passport. He sought psychological counselling, and his therapist suggested becoming a woman.

"I noticed I became much happier even just talking about it," she said. "Eventually I realized transition would make me happy and nothing else would."

She'd already had everything a typical Canadian male would want - a wife, three children, a large house in West Vancouver, horses, five acres of land, a Mercedes and a Cadillac. But she was trapped in a man's body. She's now estranged from her family but surrounded by friends. When she decided to start taking female hormones at a Kelowna restaurant, a dozen supporters were there to cheer her on.

Now she's anxious to get the surgery needed to make her transition complete. In August, she'll be eligible for an operation in Montreal that will remove her male "exterior plumbing" and replace them with female "interior plumbing." If she decides to pay for it herself, it'll cost about $15,000.

With the hormones and electrolysis, Willow's body hair has all but disappeared. Breasts have started to form and her hips have become wider. Her sex drive is almost non-existent.

"I don't even get the jokes anymore," she said laughing. A production company has optioned the rights for a screenplay she wrote about her nightmare in Thailand, and the National Film Board is considering a film about her transition. She's now writing her third book - Commuting by Bike.

"The last year has been the happiest of my entire life. I've been myself. I'm much more confident because I know who and what I am," she said. "At the end, you are what you want to be."

Smalls....

Rosa to produce three pieces of identification. Rosa complied, producing three pieces of photo identification, one in which Rosa looked like a man, one in which Rosa looked like a woman, and one in which Rosa's gender was indeterminate. The bank teller then refused to provide Rosa with a loan application saying she would not provide one until Rosa went home, changed clothing and appeared in what the teller considered to be usual clothing for a man.

[GAIN News - 5/1/99]

From Private Sector to Public Sector

A transexual brothel madam is elated that her past sexual history has not prevented her from winning a council seat in the Western Australian town of Kalgoorlie-Boulder. Leigh Varis-Beswick grew up in the Goldfields city as a male in the 1950s and 60s and returned, nearly 20 years later, as a female.

The 49-year-old says she wants to give something back to her home town. "Being the madam of the brothel is not grounding for entering local politics or councils but I don't see that as a barrier," she said.

"Why I can't have a go, and a lot of people said to me, being a poofter and a sex change and all these sorts of things 'How dare you?'

"And I said 'How dare I not?'. I'm as just as good as you are and I'm going to get in there and have a go."

[GAIN News - 5/8/99]

Smalls....

Reel Transsexuals

An independent film titled The Adventures of Sebastian Cole was due to be released on June 25, 1999. According to the article, the film portrays a "regular-guy step-father," who "matter-of-factly" tells his family of one's decision "to become a woman."

Says Tod Williams, the writer and director of the autobiographical movie, "I did have a close family friend who was a transsexual." Williams says that experience was the inspiration for the movie.

"I didn't want to play a cross-dressing male," says Clark Gregg, the actor chosen to portray the transforming stepfather. With the character Gregg plays, "what you see is what you get."

[GAIN News - 5/15/99]

In Defence of Gays and Lesbians

The British Government was forced to admit that it was difficult to provide any good reason for maintaining its policy of banning lesbians and gay men from serving in the armed forces. The admission came as the Ministry of Defence failed to provide convincing arguments in facing the most serious legal challenge to its blanket ban. The case (Smith versus MoD) had its full hearing before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg today.

The Government's legal team indicated a willingness to review the MoD policy when the next Armed Forces Bill comes before Parliament in 2001. However if, as now seems likely, the Court finds that the MoD ban does indeed violate the European Convention on Human Rights, some believe that the British Government will be under impossible

REGRETS, SHE'S HAD A FEW...

But life out of the limelight suits Renée Richards, tennis' most celebrated eye doctor.

By Cindy Shmerler,

Tennis magazine

"I didn't come out the way people come out today," says Renée Richards. She is speaking in hushed tones, even though the closest people to where she is sitting on a bench near Route 22 in Putnam County, N.Y., are perhaps one hundred feet away.

Often, especially on weekends, this busy road, which stretches from New York City to the Berkshire Mountains in Massachusetts, is all but impassable. But on this day, it's as placid as the cloudless sky. And placid is just fine with Richards, who has worked long and hard to reclaim the anonymity that slipped away so swiftly when word of her sex-change operation shocked the tennis world back in the 1970's.

Richards is quite tall at 6-foot-1, and is dressed in rust colored silk slacks, sandals, delicate gold-hoop earrings, and just a hint of black eyeliner. It's with a touch of sadness that she revisits that moment when her life was irrevocably changed. "I moved 3,000 miles to start up a new practice and a new life and to live anonymously," she says: "But I was found out."

The sex reassignment in 1975 that transformed Richard Raskind, M.D., into Renée Richards, M.D., remains almost 25 years later, a highly sensitive topic for her. Now 64, Richards have a thriving pediatric ophthalmology practice and a 27-year relationship. She also continues to play tennis, the sport that has brought measures of both pleasure and pain into her life. But it's the operation and its aftermath that people still want to discuss, still want to dissect.

Richards hasn't given any interviews in recent years. But when she does decide to engage the subject, it's with complete, and often startling, candor.

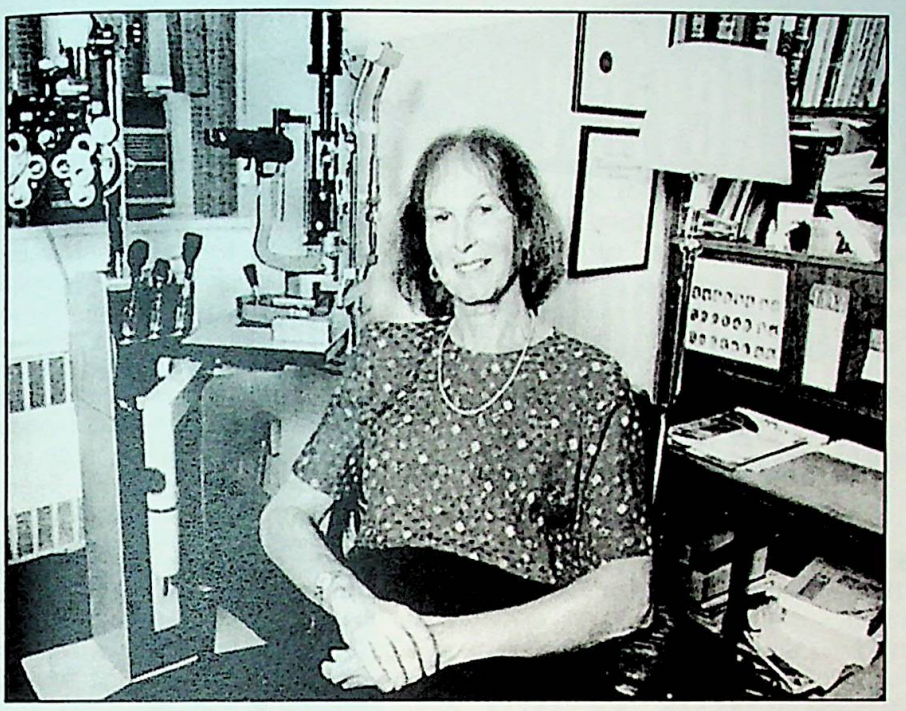
"I get a lot of letters from people in their 40's who are considering having this kind of operation," Richards says. "And I discourage all of them. It's not something for somebody in their 40's to do, someone who's had a life as a man. If you're 18 or 20 and have never had the kind of (advantages) I had, and you're oriented in that direction, sure, go ahead and make right what nature didn't. But if you're a 45-year-old man and you're an airline pilot and you have an ex-wife and three adolescent kids, you better get on Thorazine or Zoloft or Prozac or get locked up or do whatever it takes to keep you from being allowed to do something like this."

Richards acknowledges that she sometimes regrets having had the operation at all. "Doesn't everybody think of the crossroads in their lives and what might have been the other way?" she asks. "Maybe you had a boyfriend that wasn't your husband and you think back and say. "Gee, if I'd married him…' and so on. I was very much in love a couple of times as a man."

But Richards doesn't spend much of her time dwelling on what might have been. "I have a great life," says Richards, who has never remarried but lives with a woman who is her personal manager and closest friend. "My life is wonderful. I wouldn't want it to be any better. It's comfortable and it's fun. I love my work and I love my friends. All my old friends are still my best friends. And I'm healthy.

"But this is a much harder way to go than if I could have somehow kept that compulsion and that side of me submerged," she adds. "I couldn't do it. Most people can't."

Every once in a while, when Richards is sitting in her Park Avenue office, she hears someone walk by and comment, "Oh, there's Renée Richards' office." She knows



they're not in awe of her tremendously successful medical practice.

"Sure it bothers me," she says. "It bothers me that when I die, my obituary will read, TRANSSEXUAL TENNIS PLAYER DR. RENÉE RICHARDS. But there's nothing I can do about it."

That became quite clear in July 1976, when she entered a local women's tennis tournament in La Jolla, Calif., only to be recognized and revealed to be the former Richard Raskind, a New York ophthalmologist who had been captain of the Yale University men's tennis team in 1954 and later competed as an amateur at Wimbledon. (Richards says she has a pretty good idea as to who did the "outing," but won't divulge the name, saying only that the person "is very old now and would deny it anyway.") Richards had moved to Newport Beach, Calif., to begin a new life after surgery, leaving an ex-wife and 4-year-old son behind, when she was thrust into an unsolicited spotlight. "It was a much bigger tournament that I thought," says Richards. "When [word got around], people said, "Well, she better not try to play women's tennis on the pro tour. I said, "Well, now I'm being excluded from something I didn't intend to do. I don't like being excluded.' So thin I got into the thing of fighting legal battles to be allowed to play."

The most popular stop along Route 22, a road that shares an Elks Lodge with several fruit stands and chin drug stores, is the Red Rooster, an old-style drive-through that serves greasy burgers, drippy onion rings, and chocolate dipped, soft-serve ice-cream cones. And even though it's too late for lunch and too early for dinner, Richards has stopped in for a quick bite.

Out back, seated at an old aluminum picnic table beneath a huge shade tree, Richards's sits watching, almost enviously, as children play miniature golf across the street. On her plate are the remnants of a pre-golf hamburger, a slightly decadent ritual she performs as often as she possibly can.

"I stop here a lot on my way to play golf," says Richards, who lives nearby in a community situated around a nine-hole course. "All my ex-tennis-playing friends were playing, so if I wanted to keep them, I had to play golf. I took it up, and I loved it. So that's what I do. I get off work and I go play golf."

Minutes later she heads off to do just that, hopping into her hunter-green Corvette Stingray convertible and speeding away, a golf bag in the front seat her only traveling companion.

Smalls....

pressure to act sooner and bring forward a policy change.

[GAIN News - 5/19/99]

We Are Family

A ground-breaking ruling handed down by the Supreme Court of Canada has radically altered the way family is defined in Canada -- "spouse" now includes same-sex partners.

The Supreme Court's decision to strike down a key section of Ontario's family law on the grounds that it is unconstitutional is seen as a major victory for gays and lesbians. The Court gave Ontario six months to amend its laws, recognizing same sex couples.

Canada's top court was asked to review the definition of "spouse" in terms of whether support payments could apply to same sex couples.

The ruling centered on a case involving the breakup of two Toronto women. A woman to whom the court refers as "M" wanted her lesbian partner to pay her support after their 12-year relationship ended in 1989. Ontario family law defines a spouse as someone of the opposite sex.

[GAIN News - 5/22/99]

With Their Knickers Thai'd in Knots

The government of Thailand has asked television networks to avoid broadcasting shows "that promote sexual abnormalities," referring specifically to transsexuals and cross-dressers, to "prevent innocent youngsters from imitating unfavorable examples." The senior official overseeing broadcasting, Kulya Boonak, said the move was sparked by numerous complaints lodged on Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai's Internet home page.

[GAIN News - 5/22/99]

Smalls....

FTM is Still a Mother

Andrew Miller, a transsexual man,appeared, in Monroe County Family Court to fight To retain joint parental rights of his nine year old daughter.

Miller was married to Leroy Peasley for nine years. During this time Miller gave birth to his daughter. They were divorced in October of 1994.Joint custody was an issue won by Miller in the divorce. Since, Miller has transitioned and had surgery to be a man.

Peasley is seeking sole custody and limited parental rights for Miller. The petition states Miller is unfit as a parent due to his gender reformation and pursuit of a homosexual lifestyle -- though transgendered, Miller identifies as lesbian.

Miller stated in an interview, "...though I have lost everything (house, job, family and friends) of importance to me, as a mother the loss of my daughter is unacceptable to me...being a mom is a role of love and trust, not a gender. I was gifted with this role at her birth...I'll always be her mother."

[GAIN News - 5/29/99]

Female Impersonator Dies

Famed female impersonator Charles Pierce, whose deliciously wicked take-offs of stars such as Bette Davis and Mae West brought him fame in America and Europe, has died at the age of 72, a family friend said Wednesday. Pierce, dubbed a "male actress" by San Francisco columnist Herb Caen, died at his North Hollywood home Monday. He had been battling cancer complicated by a stroke, his longtime friend Peter Mintun said.

[GAIN News - 6/5/99]

Book Review

The Legend of Pope Joan: In Search of the Truth

REVIEW

The Legend of Pope Joan: In Search of the Truth

By Peter Stanford Fitzhenry & whiteside,

207 pages, $32.95

BY DIEGO RIHADENEIRA, Boston Globe

There are few institutions in the world so dominated by men as the Vatican. This is a source of much unhappiness for many women in the world, and there is no sign of change any time soon. After all, church fathers say, Jesus chose men to be his disciples. The church was built upon Peter's shoulders, and all his successors can claim an apostolic and exclu-sively male succession from Jesus on down. But what if one of the men who sat on Peter's throne was actually a woman? To many, such a possibility would seem preposterous. But in his riveting new book, The Leg-end of pope Joan, Peter Stanford provides a compelling account of one of the least-known stories in church history: In 853, an Eng-lishwoman dressed as a man and reigned as Pope John VJII for two years before her ruse was uncov-ered.

Most Catholics probably have never even heard of the "she-pope," as Stanford calls Joan/John. Stanford, a British journalist and former editor of The Catholic Herald, suggests that's because the Roman Catholic Church, which has long refuted the story of Joan as mere fable or Protestant propaganda, wants it that way.

"The Catholic Church's objec-tion to female ordination is based not on scripture but on tradition;' writes Stanford in a book that un-folds like a good mystery yarn. "There have never been women priests so there never can be. That argument might be difficult to sustain if once a woman had sat on Saint Peter's throne."

Likewise, a female pope would also deal a serious blow to the church's sacred notion that pon-tiffs are divinely ordained to be the vicars of Christ on Earth. "For even if Joan fooled the men around her, she could not have tricked God;' Stanford argues. "He would have known her real identity and gender.. Did God want a female pope? And if he did, where does that leave the current Catholic ban on women at the altar?"

Stanford leans on circumstan-tial evidence to build a strong, if

not entirely convincing, case for Joan. Still, he skillfully juggles facts, hints, and possibilities to turn out a fascinating historical detective story.

He gives us some tantalizing clues. There is the shrine on Rome's Vicus Papissa - literally the "street of the woman pope" -that is believed to have once contained a statue of Joan before it was taken down on papal orders. The street is supposedly where Joan gave birth - thus revealing her true gender - and was killed. Thereafter, papal servants report, pontiffs refused to travel down that thoroughfare.

'SHE COULD NOT HAVE TRICKED GOD'

There is also the bust of Pope Zachary in the Cathedral of Siena, which 16th-century writ-ers say replaced one of Pope Joan. And there is a special chair with a hole in the seat that Stanford found stored in the Vatican Mu-seum - reportedly used for a time to probe the genitals of a newly elected pope to make sure of his gender.

To the Catholic Church, as Stan-ford details, the story of the "she-pope" is a Protestant smear cam-paign perpetrated in the early years of the Reformation. "Dedicated followers of Luther, Calvin, and Henry VIII tampered with ancient manuscripts and inserted fictitious references to a woman pope so as to make the papacy look foolish and hence belittle its claim to universal, God-given authority he writes.

Some of Stanford's pivotal evi-dence

comes from the passages about Joan contained in the pre-Reformation chronicles of the pa-pacy written by the 13th-century Dominican priest. Martin Polonus. Basing his argument on the expertise of rare-manuscript librarians at Oxford, Stanford claims that in succeeding cen-turies no one could have duplicat-ed the writing and illustrating style of Polunus' era. Stanford concludes, therefore, that "well before the Reformation Joan was accepted as fact"

In the end, though, it is precisely the 400-year gap between Joan's pontificate and Polunus' writings that raise doubts about the "she-pope?' Then again, as Stanford shrewdly points out, there are many examples of historical events being written about after they occurred for example, the Gospels' accounts of Jesus' life and death.

Like a hard-nosed detective, Stanford spent countless hours combing through ancient Vatican manuscripts in several European libraries to try to corroborate the story of Joan. The reader is re-warded with a thorough, intelli-gent, and absorbing tale.

Whether the "she-pope" story is true or not, the church, as Stan-ford argues, should be more forthcoming about its past. The church should, he writes, "show a little more humility when dictat-ing from on high which episodes of history - usually those that re-flect well on it - are worthy of re-spect and which can be swept un-der an already lumpy carpet"

LESBIANS WIN EQUAL RIGHTS BY MARRYING

A lesbian couple will wed on Tuesday morning (10th November) at Camden Registry office at 10.30am.

Earlier this year Dr Tracie O'Keefe, 43, a psychotherapist, and her partner Katrina Fox, 32, a journalist, hit the headlines when the chief registrar of Westminster refused to marry the couple, even though O'Keefe's birth certificate records her as male. The original ceremony was cancelled at the eleventh hour by the registrar who said he could not allow two women to marry.

It has taken 8 months for the Government to concede and allow the couple to marry as man and wife, even though Dr O'Keefe, a transsexual, has lived as female since the age of 15.

Both Fox and O'Keefe, authors of the highly acclaimed book on transsexualism Trans-X-U-All: The Naked Difference, are marrying out of protest for the inequality shown to lesbian, gay and transgendered people by the UK government.

O'Keefe and Fox are angry that they have to suffer the humiliation of going through this ceremony in order to secure pension, inheritance and other rights automatic to heterosexual couples.

O'Keefe says: "It is insulting, after having lived all my adult life as a woman, to be forced to stand in front of bureaucrats and be referred to as 'he', 'Mr' 'the groom' and 'husband' just to protect our financial and contractual futures. It is nothing less than abuse and an attack on my core identity as a lesbian woman. Many other countries no longer allow this kind of discrimination against transsexuals."

Fox adds, "We feel let down by the Government, which has backtracked on all its pre-election promises to gay people - the age of consent, the decision not to overturn Section 28 or support the Sexual Orientation Discrimination Bill, which would outlaw discrimination against gays in the workplace. All Tracie and I want is the right for our relationship to be recognised in law - but for what it is - a lesbian relationship, not a heterosexual one. It is ludicrous that we have to go to these lengths and Tony Blair should be ashamed of himself."

Although the ceremony itself is private, O'Keefe and Fox are inviting lesbians, gay men and transgendered people to come and protest outside Camden Registry office and demand their equal rights from the Government.

Smalls....

Crossdress for Success

Gwyneth Paltrow, who's last corss-dressing turn earned her an Academy Award for best actress, is contemplating yet another butch role. Harvey Weinstein, the Miramax co-head who has shepherded Paltrow's thus-far brilliant career (he didn't have anything to do with the perfectly crappy "Perfect Murder") has approached her about starrring in the film verson of lesbian author Jeanette Winterson's "The Passion." The story is a romance about Napoleon's cook, Henri, who falls madly in love with the daughter of a Venetian gondolier, Vinelle. She, however, is a cross-dressing pickpocket with webbed feet who prefers action of the Sappho variety.

The material, which Miramax bought in 1997, is admittedly difficult and likened to "The English Patient" in complexity. But in the very capable hands of lesbian producer Christine Vachon ("Velvet Goldmine"), it could result in naked gold man number two for Gwyneth.

[GAIN News - 6/19/99]

Longer, Darker Lashes

In Iran, a 22-year-old man has been given 20 lashes of the whip in a conservative religious city for wearing make-up.

[GAIN News - 6/26/99]

IT'S NOT THE CLOTHES YOU WEAR

National Post Writes About Our Members

By Jerry Gladman

[Last March 1999 this article appeared in the National Post. Michael A. Gilbert is, of course, Miqqi Alicia. But you should also know that both Ed and Terence are pseudonyms for club members Kimberly and Lyn.]

Sitting across from Michael Gilbert in his cluttered, but comfy east end home while he articulates his feelings on why he sometimes has a need and desire to dress like a woman, I keep thinking: This guy is one bad-looking lady.

As if reading my mind, Mr. Gilbert, who teaches philosophy at York University, including a course on gender and sexuality, smiles and says: "I know. Even at my best, I look like a large, unattractive woman. I don_t get too many takes." But then, as he explains, crossdressing really has less to do with external looks than it has with internal feelings. Crossdressers, or transvestites, to offer the medical characterization, wear women_s clothes to express their inner self. They yearn to bring out the femine side of their personalities by assuming an externally female role.

"I feel feminine," says Mr. Gilbert, 53, a New York native who, like many in the ?60s and ?70s, came to Canada to avoid a tour of duty in Vietnam. "There is a part of me expressed more fully when I_m cross-dressed. It_s a part of me I like and with which I_m comfortable.

I feel different, sound different, move different. And it_s fun."

He certainly seems at ease in his colorful sweater, plain slacks and tasteful silk scarf, although he wears no makeup nor wig (he does when fully dressed). He says this outfit represents his preference in women_s togs and admits spending very little on his wardrobe.

"I don_t wear mini-skirts or fish-net stockings or anything like that. Most cross-dressers aren_t like that. It isn_t about being flashy or being noticed. When I go out en femme, I dress like most women."

A crossdresser since childhood, Mr. Gilbert, whose female name is Miqqi Alicia, is part of a growing social phenomenon that passes through all boundaries. In fact, the three men in this article - a university professor, stock broker and a cancer specialist - are fairly representative of the members of this community.

Research shows that most crossdressers are neither homosexuals nor aspiring transsexuals. They tend to crossdress because they enjoy the feel of women_s clothes or because they enjoy looking like women and escaping the male persona. But they have no desire to actually be a woman and the majority are attracted only to women.

Very few really have a clue why they are driven to wear female clothing. There are countless theories - heredity, hormones, genetics - but in truth, no firm, neat, generally-accepted answers for the guys who dress as gals other than how it makes them feel.

"People think we_re gay," says Mr. Gilbert. "They see the world in heterosexual terms so it makes more sense to them that a guy who dresses as a woman is gay.Their view is that there are two sexes - your gender matches the sex and that_s it. But I like women. In fact, I_m fairly shocked at the age I am I_ve never had a homosexual experience."

Many people think they_re gay, but also think they_re freaks. Toronto may be a fairly tolerant society, but there is still a heavy social stigma associated with transvestism. "Freaks might be the perception of the public with people seeing this as a deviation from the norm," says Maxine Petersen, co-ordinator of the gender identity clinic at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

"But a large percentage of society deviates from the norm in one way or another. Geniuses deviate and they aren_t considered freaks. I think by and large crossdressers are as average as any group of individuals."

Married three times - one natural child and four stepchildren, all of whom are at ease with his crossdressing - Gilbert is one of the few of his ilk who is completely out. As a teacher, he feels he has a moral obligation to his students, particularly transgendered ones, to reveal himself.

"I am a committed crossdresser," he says. "I am one, will always be one and, thank you very much, I_ve reached the point of enjoying it."

Not all of his fellow crossdressers are quite as comfortable with their situation. Ms. Petersen sees many in distress. Some are filled with shame and guilt, others have seen their marriages dissolve because of it and some have probably even considered suicide.

Yet while more and more are coming to terms with their desires, few see a need to go public. In many cases, it would be harmful to their careers.

"I live my life as both a man and a woman," says Terence, 42, a super successful stock broker, who prefers to be called Teri when dressed as a woman. (Most have women_s names and tend to refer to each other in the female gender.)

"Most of my social life is spent as a girl. But I work as a boy. It_s really no one else_s business, but coming out would hurt me professionally. It would make people uncomfortable. So I lead two lives."

We_re sitting in a booth in a popular lesbian bar in the Church-Wellesley area. Teri is dressed in casual female attire with an expensive wig and a professionally made-up face. At first sight, I thought he was an attractive woman - and kept walking. He seemed to enjoy not being made.

Up close, he comes across as a pretty, but masculine-looking woman. Everything else leans wholly towards the feminine. His graceful movements, the way he talks, how he carries his slender six-foot frame all deliberate and part of transvestite expression.

A father of three small children whose wife of 12 years has no difficulty with his double life - they often travel and socialize together as girlfriends - Teri says a lot changed for him and other crossdressers with the arrival of the Internet.

"It provided us with information that was previously unavailable. We learned it was okay and there are a lot of people who feel the same."

Now there are even stores and other services springing up that cater to crossdressers and help them put together the complete package. Magazines run ads for wigs or bras or other paraphanalia to assist transvestites in their dressing up.

Some are regulars at a Gerrard St. outlet called Take A Walk On The Wild Side, which provides wigs, makeup, clothing and other apparell and aids (such as body reinforcements) that help them pass in many ways as women. The owner is Patricia Aldridge and her customers are often referred to as Paddi_s Girls.

"We sell anything that the crossdresser would want to wear to help them look like women," says manager Roxy, who is married to Ms. Aldridge (they were wed as two brides).

"I_m talking about makeup, fake boobs, hips, you name it. You can_t just pop a wig on and pass. These guys have ideas what women should look like and we help them achieve that. We do makeup and co-ordination so they look like women but also don_t offend the opposite sex."

Roxy refers to himself as a professional crossdresser. "I work as a shop girl and part of our thing here is to help other crossdressers come out."

Susan Kirsh, owner of Kirsh Cosmetic Clinic on Eglinton Ave. W., now has numerous crossdressers among her upscale clientele, and even does crossdressing workshops that attract customers from far and wide.

"They_re really fun and interesting people, but it_s actually a lot

of work and a big challenge. From the beginning , I didn_t want them to look like drag queens. They want to look more natural as women which requires camouflage for beard coverage and other things. We teach them proper techniques so they can do it themselves."

With a theatre background, she liked the challenge of transforming men into women. "Many return time and again to learn new techniques.

They are very serious about going out in public as females and not having people know. They want a natural look and we give it to them."

Meanwhile, many in the Toronto community belong to a support group called Xpressions. There are only about 130 members locally, but they are linked to several organizations across the country. Most are attracted to the comfort of being with similar-minded folk.

Ed, 49, an oncologist, who is very secretive about his dressing for professional reasons - "medical people are no more or less understanding than the rest of the world" - only recently travelled beyond his little confined corner when he joined Xpressions. "I_ve made friends in this group and it_s very healing," he says.

Like most transvestites, he first started crossdressing as a small child. At times, he says, there is a sexual element involved, especially around puberty, but that eventually dissipates.

"It_s something about the clothes. It can be erotic. For some, it_s a wish or desire to be a female ... But I like my body and who I am. And my sexual orientation has always been towards women."

He_s been in several relationships and his crossdressing has never posed a real problem. One women even enjoyed being with him as a woman. "It was a sexual and gender-bending thing. But it was more in the privacy of our home than anything else."

A major concern for crossdressers, especially those seeking anonymity, is being recognized in public. Ed avoids it by not going out as a woman too often, but Mr. Gilbert says most crossdressers take risks.

"You could bump into someone you didn_t want to. I recall walking on Church St. and passing people I knew. They walked right by. People see what they expect to see."

Few report any real hassles when they do go out. While there are always brutes and bashers at large, the majority of citizens tend to be tolerant. They either don_t know or don_t care. And most crossdressers take the same precautions as women.

"When I speak to clerks in a store, they don_t bat an eye," says Mr.Gilbert. "Once you hear the voice, you know. But it should never be an issue if you use sensible street smarts." He chuckles out loud. "The only time I was harrassed was for wearing fall colors when I shouldn_t have."

The desire to dress as women varies widely with crossdressers. Where Teri spends half his life en femme, Mr. Gilbert generally does it only two or three times a month. He teaches as man, but will do some classes as a woman as part of the course.

Both Mr. Gilbert and Teri have come out to their families and have received total acceptance. Gilbert_s mother reacted by saying: "Okay, if you_re going to be a crossdresser, you have to lose weight." Teri_s mother insisted on going shopping with him to help him select proper attire.

And as for those who are not accepting and still see them as freaks, they aren_t usually a concern.

"That_s their problem," says Mr. Gilbert.

"I haven_t lost any friends over this. I have tenure at York, so I_m protected, but there are also a lot of good people there. And we_re also protected under the Human rights Act. I can_t help what ignorant people might think nor do I particularly care."

Ed agrees and says crossdressing is part of what_s made him who he is today."It_s a part of me I like. At the same time, it doesn_t mean I advocate it for anyone else. And the truth is, I wouldn_t have chosen for this to be a part of my life - if I had a choice. It_s not easy to be different."

He pauses and then, with a good laugh, adds: "But you know what - normal is grossly over-rated sometimes."

Feature

COMING OUT TO MY SPECIAL ONE

by Lynne McArdle

We all play the game,
And when we dare
To cheat ourselves at solitaire....

--Janis Ian, "At Seventeen"

A Coming Out is a major step for each of us, and is usually a cause for celebration. But we also endure various other "coming outs," to family and friends for example, that can be intimidating and frightening.

There is never a good time for such things. No matter how much one wants to prepare for the event, or even wants to avoid it, if one is in a relationship there must come a day when the second self is shared with the Special One (SO). What happens from there depends on the way it is presented, and on the SO herself.

I am very lucky in that my SO, whom I'll call "DL," is an intelligent, educated lady. She is not quick to jump to conclusions, preferring to gather all the facts and arrive at a logical conclusion. Best of all in this situation, she is not afraid of research, and working in the health-care field, has access to various medical libraries and other resources. Still, even with such an understanding and intelligent person, there are a few things I would do differently if I had to do it all over again. In this item, I'll explain what happened, and then discuss what should have, in my opinion, been done differently, as well as what was done well.

What Happened

DL and I had been seeing each other for some time. Although we were not married, nor were we living together, we had been seeing each other long enough to know that we were committed to each other. DL and I had been attracted right from the start, and I am pleased and proud to say that she was (and still is) my best friend, my soul mate, my love, and my life.

Still, the question of making a more permanent commitment kept coming up. I was naturally hesitant, owing to my TG status--my hesitancy ranged from the practical (my closet full of feminine clothes) to the questions I had no answers for (how could I keep this hidden?). DL was naturally puzzled by my hesitancy, and kept wondering why I was stalling.

Finally one evening, I just blurted it out. In fact, the revelation was out before I really knew I had said it. My memory of the exact sequence of events is rather hazy, but I do remember telling her the fact itself, mentioning the TG social and support club I belong to, saying that I attended another support group, and doing a rather ineffective job of reassuring her about everything.

DL did not take the news well, but she did not take it badly either. She asked a few simple questions, but later it was revealed that she was somewhat too stunned to ask much of substance. Blithely, I continued on. I told her my name, I got a few things from my closet in answer to one of her questions, and I showed her this web page. I dug some photos out from my files, and I got some TG club newsletters from there as well. I was quite nervous, but thought things were going well.

They were not. I finally saw the tears coming out from DL's beautiful brown eyes, and I realized that I had gone a little too far. She was simply overwhelmed with all this. I dropped everything and gathered her into my arms. She snuggled up as only she can, and the two of us cried together for a while. A number of tissues later, with everything returned to the files and the closet, and with the computer turned off, we resumed our discussion. This time, DL's questions were much more probing: was I planning to transition fully? Just what occurred at social club gatherings? Are other TGs in relationships? How do their SOs feel about it? They were good questions, and I answered them as best I could.

One question I did not have to deal with was the usual first one: "Are you gay?" Thankfully, DL understood the difference between gender and sexuality already. But we discussed things far into the night, and by the time we parted, DL was a little happier than she had been. Yes, I still loved her very much, and needed her more than ever. Yes, I had discussed this with the medical professionals, and was getting help. She even managed a brave little smile and said that we were about the same size, so maybe we could trade clothes sometime.

Over the next few weeks, I did double-duty trying to find suitable resources for her. I asked people in my social club and at the support group if they knew of any support mechanisms for SOs. I suggested various books to DL, and pointed her to papers published online. As information came to me, I turned it over to her, and let her have her head with it.

She, in turn, pursued the topic with her characteristic perseverance. Using the medical resources she had at her disposal, she researched and read up on the topic, as well as used the Internet. She read the scholarly papers there,

and some that were not so scholarly. She viewed all kinds of personal TG Web pages, some of which frightened her, and others which reassured her. And she read my own web page fully. She e-mailed and called people who had offered to be contacts, and began her own correspondence with them.

Together, we participated one night in the Internet chat in the Pink Room, and we later talked about the topics that were discussed in there. Gradually, she came to realize that for the most part, TGs were just people who had some kind of desire to express their femininity. Why, she didn't know, nor did there seem to be a pattern in how it was manifested or how far one would go with it, but she came to see the pain, the difficulty in acceptance, and the stresses that all TGs feel.

Through all these activities, I remained in male mode, but before long, she asked if she could meet Lynne. Thus, we spent one Saturday afternoon chatting over coffee, two girls together, and she got to know the real Lynne. I'm glad to say that DL and Lynne got along very well, and she now looks at Lynne as a girlfriend, and one whom she looks forward to seeing.

It was difficult and stressful, but we managed to come through it, and our relationship is now stronger than ever. DL knows Lynne, and enjoys their friendship. I am happy to have a friend like DL, and fortunate that we can also have the relationship that we have always had. Together, we can happily explore and discover my gift with the knowledge that our commitment to each other is safe.

What Worked and What Didn't

As you can no doubt tell, I was lucky in many ways: DL is open-minded, not apt to jump to conclusions, not afraid of research, and willing to make an effort towards making our relationship work. She also had certain resources at her disposal that most people don't have. But in spite of all those qualities, the situation could have gone badly if I was not willing to make some efforts on my part. In this section, I'll list the things I think I could have improved on, and the things that I think went well.

First, the things that needed improvement:

I should have prepared more. I should have had resources--a bibliography, a list of good Web sites, some downloaded and printed research papers--to offer. I should have done a little more preparatory work in setting the revelation up: mentioning that I had something important to tell her, and not doing it after we had each had a hard day at the office.

I especially would have prepared a list of personal contacts. These would be mostly women like herself, who were in a relationship with a TG partner. One of the things that she mentioned was that she would like to communicate with other women in a similar situation, and while we have managed to find her a few, things might have been easier if I had arranged such a list earlier.

I should not have "overwhelmed" her with clothes and photos and things right after telling her. She would have assimilated the information at her own pace, and we could have progressed through everything at a speed she was comfortable with.

I should have realized that it would be a shock to her. I have lived with this all my life; she has not. It took me years to accept myself; I should have realized that she could not (nor could anybody) accept this within minutes.

I should have anticipated her questions. Some, I was expecting, but others were surprising. Mostly, they were due to a lack of knowledge, but I should have expected that she was not as acquainted with the topic as I am. If I had to do it all over again, I'd study the reputable resources that are available, and would try to be as ready as possible for any--and I mean any--question.

Now, the things that went well:

I stayed in male mode throughout the process. This is how she has always known me, and it was comforting and familiar to her. The news is difficult enough to deal with; there would have been little achieved by forcing her to deal with what is essentially a strange woman.

As soon as possible after revealing the news, I worked to supply her with contacts, reputable resources, and other sources of information. Then I let her do with them as she pleased--she followed up on the ones that she felt would help her, and would answer her questions to her satisfaction.

I was ready and willing to talk about it whenever she wanted, and did not force the topic on her after the initial revelation. I didn't often instigate a TG-related conversation, but if she brought it up, I was willing to discuss it. There were no, "let's talk about this laters;" if she wanted to talk, we talked.

Cheating Ourselves at Solitaire

I've presented this item as my own story of coming out to my SO. I am fully aware that TGism is one reason why marriages break up, nasty name-calling happens, and much bad blood exists between two people in a formerly loving relationship. I have heard too many horror stories about coming out to SOs to suggest that it is easy, or that such a task can be achieved in a few easy steps. If you have everything to lose and nothing to gain, there is little point in coming out to your SO.

Yet I also believe that the longer one waits, the more difficult it becomes. And in a relationship, there is a certain level of trust implied--by hiding an aspect of oneself, one risks betraying that trust. If my story, or anything in it, can help you, I'm happy.

In my case, it was one of the best things I could have done. To think that I could play the game and fool myself into thinking I could handle this alone, that I could keep this aspect of my personality a secret, was just like cheating at solitaire: winning becomes a hollow victory. Yes, I would have been victorious. But I also would have suffered much stress and denied DL of the company of someone whom she has come to like a great deal.

While there was room for improvement in the way I broke the news, the effort both DL and I put into making it work paid off. Our relationship is stronger than ever, and we remain happy, trusting, and loving with each other.

COMING OUT: ONE VIEW FROM THE OTHER SIDE by DL

He sang as if he knew me....

--Roberta Flack, "Killing Me Softly With His Song"

From my seat in the audience I heard a voice from the stage. A deep, resonant voice that caught me off guard. I looked up and saw a very handsome man at the microphone preparing to go on stage with his crew of musicians. He calmly and firmly took charge of the audience, drawing them into his tale and his song. I was transfixed and mesmerized; I saw and heard only him. I decided I had to meet him and within a few days had managed to contact him by telephone. His wonderful voice again set my heart racing as we amicably made plans to meet for coffee within the next week.

That initial chance meeting has changed my life forever. It has brought some of the most joy and the greatest love into my life. Not only for his unconditional love and his wonderful qualities, but for his very special gift. After nearly a year of learning about each other and finding we were compatible and very comfortable with each other, there was, for some reason on his part, a great deal of hesitancy for further commitment beyond the point at which we had arrived. We agreed we were soul mates and destined to be together. Any other outcome was inconceivable. Yet there was a distance between us; a wall he had erected.

He qui often alluded to his need for privacy and time alone; he noted at times he didn't want to be lost in a relationship. He wanted to maintain his distance. Yet we were so very happy together. I gave him time and space, even though at times it nearly broke my heart.

Then one night, he told me something I was quite unprepared to hear. He was so frightened and I was afraid also. He told me he was Gender Dysphoric. Perhaps because he knew of my strong medical background he could easily convey the concept in common medical terminology.

But it was suddenly out in the open. The words hung in the air only briefly. I instantly reassured him I knew the difference between sex and gender. I had studied a little bit about some of the concepts and issues in university. I knew many things on a intellectual level; there were also many things I didn't know. It seemed safer to keep things in the medical realm and on an intellectual level for awhile. The emotional impact had not yet hit.

uring the next hour he shared with me photographs, support group newsletters, and his Internet website. It was all so overwhelming. All I saw and heard were the names and pictures of what to me were other women. They were, in reality, friends of his who were of the same persuasion: men who enjoyed expressing themselves as women.

It seemed such a base concept, but gradually I felt unable to cope. I began to cry. I was hurt and angry and jealous. I felt betrayed and felt as if suddenly there was another person in our relationship; someone whom I did not know and someone I was not prepared to meet. I wanted everything to go away and I wanted the clock to rewind. I suddenly knew with brute force the reasons for his continual insistence on "privacy" and "time alone". I was angry. I felt as if I wanted to hurt him the way he had hurt me. I wanted to push him away and make him come after me, as if to somehow reassure me that he truly wanted me.

Yet I was able to keep my emotions in check and not say anything I would regret later. I am so very glad I had the foresight to do what I did. Rather than push him away, as I was realizing he was just as afraid as I was, I desperately needed his arms around me and his reassuring words telling me he still loved me. He did offer me the option of leaving if I thought his revelation would be unacceptable to our relationship, but the thought of leaving permanently never crossed my mind. Eventually, I began to cry as suddenly everything became too much to handle. He gently gathered me into his arms and we both cried. Then we made love to one another as if to show what words could not express: that we still loved each other very much.

As I went back to my place I had so many thoughts and fears and worries tumbling through my mind. I could not get to sleep and was extremely restless. In many ways it was as if somebody had died. Things between us would never be the same. At the time I was quite unprepared for the unique way our relationship would be strengthened. This new information seemed so very important to understand. I was desperately afraid the man I had fallen in love with, the man whom I had found to be my soul mate, would no longer be there. I was afraid that everything would change.

Inn effort to try and put everything into some semblance of order I embarked on a journey of discovery. I researched and read everything I could get my hands on about gender dysphoria, transgender issues, and the like.

I gradually began to understand with my heart what my Special One had gone through. My heart went out to him and it was as if I wanted to pull him into my arms and offer him reassurance that we would be able to survive as a couple, and that I would accept his unique position. I was able to see that much of the gender issue was related to feeling comfortable in expressing his feminine side without fear of rejection or disgust. Whether this expression was in the form of dressing in his female clothes, or whether it was feeling comfortable in suggesting a sappy romantic film for a Friday night, he simply wanted to be loved and accepted for who he was. Really, isn't that what we all want?

Over the next few weeks we had many long discussions. He was wonderful in answering my questions, no matter how naive they appeared. He treated me with respect and careful consideration, and I did the same for him. Perhaps it was our profound love that allowed us to reach out and offer strength to the other rather than let us hurl words of hurt and disgust and hate, which can so often happen.

We gradually began to even see some of the fun and humour in our special situation. Only we knew about Lynne (aside from his circle of friends in his support group and the Internet). It was a delicious secret and I gradually began to feel honoured to have been given such special information. I realized it had to come out as we were trying to prepare for a life together and it would not fit us well to have had any secrets between us.

Looking back, I now know why it took so long for him to tell me about Lynne: he was afraid he would lose me. I suppose there is always that possibility when coming out. However, as I have learned, there is never an easy or perfect time to reveal such news. I am simply glad he has shared this aspect of his life with me.

Since that time we have come so very far. We have had the chance to meet as two girls. We were both nervous and shy during our first meeting. I was afraid of what Lynne would be like; she was afraid of what I would think and that I might not like her. Our fears were put to rest as we shared our first afternoon together. We liked each other and agreed we should meet again sometime.

Since that time we have learned to enjoy and celebrate all the wonderful aspects that T*ness brings to our lives. It gives Lynne a chance to express herself whenever she wants to in an environment that is loving and supportive. We have each found a new friend in the other and do enjoy one another's company. I am grateful for what Lynne has brought into my life.

This whole experience has brought us closer together than we ever thought possible. We are able to continue along our journey as we learn more about this special gift. We have the encouragement and warmth and support of each other so that no matter what rocks fall into our path, the other will help navigate to a safe haven. We are uncertain where our path will end, but we do know that it will lead to home.

Female transsexuals: part of the women's liberation movement

By Zanny Begg, Australia

In Djadi-Dugarang, the newsletter of the Indigenous Social Justice Association, Ray Jackson tells the story of Belinda (not her real name), a male to female transgender. In late 1997, Belinda was arrested for drug possession and sent to the Metropolitan Reception and Remand Centre at Silverwater in Sydney's west.

Despite living as a woman, and having all the physical appearances of a woman, Belinda was placed in a men's prison because she was born a male. Since she was regarded as "vulnerable," Belinda was placed in the maximum protection pod home also to rapists, pedophiles and other inmates in need of special "protection." The only concession the jail authorities made to Belinda's situation was allowing her to stay in a single cell.

Within three days of being jailed Belinda had been raped twice.

She hung herself on December 27 that year.

Belinda's story highlights the oppression female transsexuals suffer. By living as women, transgender women are subjected to the violence, sexual harassment and sexist assumptions that all women in this society are. Transgender women who want to organise against this oppression should, therefore, be considered part of the women's liberation movement.

Unfortunately, some feminists oppose this view. In the 1998 women's edition of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology student newspaper, Catylist, Jess Whyte argued, "There are several reasons why women may feel uncomfortable with the notion of transsexuals using women's-only space.

"The strongest of these is a belief that a person who has lived their whole life as a man could not possibly be free from patriarchal conditioning. It is this conditioning which teaches men that they are superior to women and causes men to exploit and oppress women that women's-only space seeks to protect women from."

Germaine Greer argues along similar lines in her latest book The Whole Woman. The 1999 National Organisation of Women Students Australia (NOWSA) conference organising collective voted to exclude transgender women from the collective and last year, the Perth Reclaim the Night Collective also decided exclude transgender women.

The argument that female transsexuals have benefited from "male privilege" is, however, debatable. Belinda clearly was not a benefactor of "male privilege" when she was jailed in a male, maximum security prison and raped. Nor would she have thanked her birth gender as she grew up struggling to reconcile what it meant to be a "man" with her deeply held conviction that she was a woman.

Although they are born as males, female transsexuals have little access to the privileges of being male. When they start to live openly as women they are harassed, intimidated, rejected and isolated for doing so. Because female transsexuals also suffer from sexism, their experiences become intertwined with those of all women in a sexist society. This is an objective basis for their participation as equals in the feminist movement. Sex inequality arises from women being locked into the institution of the family as unpaid labourers in the home and those responsible for child-care and aged care. Upon this economic base rises sexist ideology which seeks to legitimize the family as the only "normal" form of social organisation and stereotypes women sexually, physically and intellectually so as to justify maintaining their economic and social dependence on men and/or the state.

Female transsexuals are no less the victims of this sexist ideology and discrimination than other women. They are judged by their appearance, subjected to sexual and other forms of violence and denied equality with men in the work force.

This does this mean that transgender women suffer exactly the same oppression as other women. Their oppression comes from the same source (sexist society), but is not experienced in exactly the same way.

Transsexual women are also oppressed on the basis of their perceived sexuality: regardless of whether they have sex with men or with women, they are considered sexually "deviant" because transsexual sexuality (regardless of sexual orientation) undermines the sexist ideology that sex (for women) must be tied to reproduction.

Transsexuals also raise demands for democratic rights which are specific and additional to those raised by the women's liberation movement: the right to change their gender in legal documents, access to gender-reassignment medical care, against discrimination in work and so forth.

Beneath the debate about whether or not transsexuals are benefactors of "patriarchy" lies the question of what defines a women. Some of those who want to exclude transsexual women from women-only space have argued that they are not "real women" (it is asserted that women-only space is for "women who bleed"). But as Simone de Beauvoir explained, "One is not born but made a woman." That is, gender roles are socially constructed. From a young age we are punished for behaving in ways inconsistent with what sexist society deems appropriate for our gender. Girls who "play like boys" are tom-boys and boys who "play like girls" are sissies. These taunts are used to pull young people into line and teach them what behaviours are deemed appropriate for their gender.

Reducing what defines a woman to biological characteristics alone, by ignoring the social construction of "womanhood", is scientifically invalid. Defining feminist consciousness as something only those people with female sex organs can have is equally invalid. Transsexual women whose treatment as women in a sexist society leads them to fight against women's oppression are, and should be considered, part of the women's liberation movement.

Some feminists also argue that transsexual women actually reinforce gender roles by adopting behaviour and attire that is stereotypically feminine. For example, Whyte writes, "For a man to change his sex in order to fit into stereotypical feminine gender roles is to legitimize society's construction of such gender roles".

This perspective lays the blame on the wrong shoulders. Social institutions, not individual transsexuals, create gender roles for men and women. In that light, it is not surprising that transsexuals, when they adopt the opposite gender, adapt to some of the most obvious social expectations of that gender. Rather than legitimizing rigid gender roles, transsexuals simply reflect the mass acceptance of these roles, revealing that to overcome them will require collective struggle.

Feminists need to oppose those who attempt to exclude female transsexuals from women-only space. While women like Belinda are dying behind bars, no woman is free. Only by fighting together can we overcome the sexism in society that creates such rigid gender roles which oppress all women.

First posted on the Pegasus conference greenleft.news by Green Left Weekly. Correspondence and hard copy subsciption inquiries: greenleft@peg.apc.org or visit //www.peg.apc.org/~greenleft.

WORDS FROM AND FOR A WIFE:

Even Genetic Girls Get the Blues
by E. Fenton

Pity the poor partner. Not in every case, mind you; some women deal very well with their loved one's cross dressing. But all too often, this unusual pastime puts a strain on even the most solid of relationships. Unfortunately, many women are so uncomfortable, embarrassed, or simply confused about their partner's activities that they don't know how or where to seek help. Ideally, a woman should be able to discuss her problems with others who share them and can offer, if not insights, then at least a measure of sympathy and solidarity. That's where significant-other support groups come in.

When I attended an S.O. meeting, I found that it helped immensely to speak to other women who were experiencing some of the same difficulties, fears, and frustrations I was. Although few solutions were offered, it felt good to engage in the age-old sport of complaining about men, albeit with a different twist (e.g., "I hate it when he uses my makeup"). If nothing else, it was comforting to find out I wasn't the only one experiencing certain problems.

I asked veteran support-group activist Ginny Knuth to list the topics came up most frequently in support groups for S.O.'s of cross dressers. These issues are listed below, along with some of my own solutions for handling them. I realize that every couple is different: a coping strategy that works for me might be completely inappropriate for someone else; an issue that I see as a serious problem might be trivial to other women; and, conversely, a topic that I gloss over-or even omit-might be a burning issue for other couples. I don't claim to be the Dear Abby of the transgendered community; I'm just trying to do whatever I can to help the S.O. cope with the puzzling persona of her other half's other self. If you're the cross dresser half of a couple, perhaps the following list will help you gain an insight or two into some of the issues your partner is dealing with (A word to the wise: many women, for one reason or another, are very stoic about their emotional suffering; she may be in more pain than you realize). If you're the partner of a cross dresser, maybe you'll relate to some of these questions and complaints. If any of these ring a bell, perhaps this article can stimulate some discussion between partners.

1. I don't understand why he does this. Am I not "feminine" enough for him? This question nagged at me when I first found out about my husband's cross dressing proclivities. I've been a tomboy from the get-go; my idea of dressing up is to wear my polished cowboy boots rather than my manure-encrusted ones. I thought perhaps I'd failed in the femininity department and my husband had felt compelled to make up for it in his own bizarre way. Fortunately, my therapist set me straight. She told me that no one fully understands why men cross dress, but that it is not in any way their partner's fault-cross dressing men are not trying to compensate for a lack of femininity in their household. Female partners of cross dressers run the gamut from ultra-feminine, Laura-Ashley-clad women to cigar-chompin', blue-jeans-wearing tough gals. There is no correlation between a woman's perceived position on the femininity scale and her partner's desire to dress as a woman. 2. His cross dressing activities take up time that used to be/could be spent with me. I'm lonely.

I was feeling decidedly left out as my husband went to countless meetings, conventions, and various social events that I didn't care to attend. I have to hand it to him, though. He came up with an ingenious solution: he bought me a horse. I've wanted to own a horse ever since I was a kid, and finally I had a hobby/obsession that I could immerse myself in as much as he was immersing himself in his new lifestyle. Obviously, I can't prescribe horses for every neglected spouse or spouse equivalent. But perhaps you can act on some long-submerged dream that you've wanted to pursue, be it a hobby, a career, or a project. Don't just sit around and feel lonesome when he goes out with the girls: pursue your own interests and you'll feel a lot better.

Of course, parallel obsessions isn't a very good recipe for a happy relationship. Couples need to do things together, too, or what's the point of being a couple? After mulling it over for some time, we came up with a project we both enjoy: building a garden railroad in our backyard (he lays the track, I do the landscaping). Perhaps you can come up with a fun project you can work on together. If not, make sure you schedule time for activities as a couple, even if it's something as simple as going out to dinner and a movie. It helps.

If you're feeling lonely and neglected, tell him. My husband, especially in the first few months of his cross dressing spree, was having such a good time that he didn't even realize how miserable and alone I felt. After a few gentle (and not-so-gentle) reminders that I liked to do things with him, he made a point of spending more time with me.

3. I miss the presence of men. I'm sick of hearing him giggle on the phone with his "girlfriends." I don't know about you, fellow genetic girls, but part of the reason I got married was to have a man around the house. As much as I malign men when I'm with my girlfriends, I like many aspects of the masculine sex. I find that men provide a nice counterpoint to the feminine world; yin and yang and all that. Once my husband "came out," however, he became very involved in the transgendered community; he made new friends and helped out with numerous projects. Not only did I have to watch him prancing around the house in lovely frocks, I had to listen to his hour-long phone chats-business and social-with his gal pals. (Whether he's dressed up or not, he undergoes a meta-

morphosis when he talks on the phone to his transgendered friends. His voice goes a few notes higher, he giggles coyly, and tends to talk about girlish topics such as What to Wear. It drives me nuts.) Here are some of the ways I deal with cross dressing overload: * I see that he closes the door to his office when he's on the phone, and I move to another part of the house, if necessary, to avoid listening to his half of the phone conversations.

I speak up when I'm absolutely not in the mood for any thought, word, or deed that smacks of cross dressing. Sometimes I need a break-especially in my own house-and my husband is considerate enough to put away his clothes, makeup, newsletters, and other T.V. trappings when I need some time off.

He lets me know in advance if he plans to invite his transgendered friends over to the house, so I can plan other activities if I'm not transgender-friendly that day. * He recently got a post-office box, which should cut down on the number of Lane Bryant catalogs and other home-delivered reminders of his habits. 4. I'm scared. I don't know where this is heading, and he's not able to tell me. Is he bisexual? Gay? Transsexual? Something else? This is a tough issue for many couples, especially in the early "blow-out" stage, soon after the man admits he's a cross dresser. Often, he himself has no idea where his cross dressing will lead. Many men suppress or deny their cross dressing urges for years, so when they do finally allow themselves to partake of this activity, they're inundated with new feelings and emotions. From observing my husband during his early cross dressing days, I know that he was just as confused as I was about the whole phenomenon. Here's how we dealt with it.

We read books and articles on the subject. These calmed many of my fears, pointing out that the majority of cross dressers are heterosexual men who for some reason derive pleasure from wearing women's clothing. Your mate is not likely to undergo a radical change of sexual orientation.

We saw a therapist who specializes in cross dressers and people with gender-identity issues. (If you see a therapist, it's important to find one who has experience with this phenomenon, such as those who advertise in transgender organization newsletters.) We saw her as a couple and individually, and she skillfully steered us into talking about issues we had both found uncomfortable discussing at home.

I attended a significant-others meeting. As mentioned earlier, it can be very helpful to talk to women who are going through the same turmoil you are.

I went to a cross dressers' support group. If you feel you can handle it, attend a meeting or support group for cross dressers. I've been attending the monthly "rap sessions" of the Rainbow Gender Association for two years, and I've found that meeting my husband's friends and hearing them discuss their lives has proved quite valuable in helping me understand cross dressing. It takes a lot of nerve-especially at first-to go to one of these meetings, but I found most of the people there to be kind and gentle souls who are simply struggling to find out who they are. 5. I'm embarrassed. What will the neighbors think? I still haven't resolved this issue, so I'm in no position to offer advice. Perhaps another S.O. could write to this newsletter and give me some advice. I'd really prefer that the neighbors didn't know about my husband's alter ego-but I suppose they do if they've got eyes in their heads. I know I shouldn't be embarrassed, but that doesn't mean I'm not.

Meanwhile, I've asked my husband to try and exercise a little subtlety, such as not wearing lipstick and earrings when he drives out of the garage. 6. What if my family finds out? The strain of having one's parents visit for a week is bad enough without having to worry about mom finding a size 15 high heel under the couch. So far, when my folks have come to visit, the place has been sanitized for their protection. I'm sure they'll find out one of these days, but right now I'm not ready to tell them. My parents are fairly conservative, so I'm not sure they'd be up to the challenge of a son-in-law in a skirt. Besides, why do they need to know? It's up to my husband whether he wants to tell his parents about himself. I've lobbied against it, because I fear it might simply hurt and puzzle them, rather than doing anything positive for family relations. Maybe I'm wrong. You're the best judge of your particular family situation.

7. I worry when he goes out. Who is he with? What is he doing? I fear for his safety.

Safety, if you ask me, is a legitimate concern. I'm not sure that most men realize how vigilant women must be when they're out by themselves or with a group of female friends. Attacks on women-or facsimiles thereof-do happen, and many S.O.'s worry about their partner's well-being when he goes out. We also worry about gay-bashing, since your average drunken-yahoo-with-a-baseball-bat type no doubt thinks any man in drag is a queer, and therefore fair game.

I've talked to my husband about this, and he has assured me that he never walks anywhere in the city alone at night. He carries a whistle and has a phone in his car in case of emergencies. I still worry, but I'm convinced he is aware that there are many unsavory characters out there.

Since he knows I worry when he's out late, we've made an arrangement whereby he tells me what time he expects to be home, and calls me if he's running late. This won't work for everyone (some people don't appreciate calls from drag bars at 2 a.m.), but if you're worried about him you should discuss the matter with him and see what you can come up with to allay some of your fears.

8. Our sex life has suffered. Sorry, but I'm not a lesbian.

Well, I don't want to go into the gory details here, but I understand this is a common complaint. Although this topic is sometimes brought up in support groups, many women are reluctant to talk about it. Talk to your partner about your feelings, and let him know if any aspect of his behavior or appearance makes you uncomfortable. Many men are so thrilled with their newfound "other self" that they forget to take their partner's feelings into account. To compound the problem, some cross dressers are convinced that their female persona invests them with added sensitivity and insight into the female mind. Perhaps they consider themselves more sensitive lovers when endowed with feminine attributes. Maybe some are, but if I'd wanted a lesbian lover, I would have hooked up with a lesbian (at least she wouldn't have chest-hair stubble!) In addition to talking to your partner, I'd suggest seeing a therapist if you think it might help (as mentioned earlier, be sure to see someone who specializes in gender issues). In summary, my advice to any suffering S.O.'s out there would be to talk to somebody about your problems, whether it's a therapist, a relative or close friend, or women in a support group. Most importantly, talk to your partner if any of these issues-or others-are bothering you. He can't help you if he doesn't know you're hurting.

Canadian Army TS Get Attention

The Arlene Bynon Interview with Sergeant Sylvia Durand

This interview aired Wednesday January 13th, 1999, on PrimeTV, Rogers Cable Channel 54, and Thursday, January 14th, 1999 at 12 Noon, on the Global Television Network, Channel 3. (Ottawa, Canada)

Sgt. Sylvia Durand is the first member of any Armed Forces in the World, to have her HRT, and SRS approved by a military, and the Government of Canada. Before July 1, 1998, she had informed her superiors of her condition, and made an application for treatment of a medical nature. Because Sgt. Durand is not covered by an Provincial medical plans, her application and acceptance of her application caused a storm or controversy in Canada. Probably, this interview was the most important interview ever, in that for the first time in Canada, Transsexualism has been accepted and supported at the highest levels of Government. Her situation was debated in Parliament last year, the highest level of government, in Canada.

Despite an insensitive, and scathing attack on her privacy, by the Ottawa Sun last November 7th. 1998, and national published editorials, Sylvia remained steadfast, and was strongly supported by her peers and Senior Officers. She was approached by a very special woman, with a reputation for clarity in her interviews. The Canadian Forces agreed to let Sylvia be interviewed.

Xpressions was proud to have SergeantBynon attend our Christmas dinner last December.

Arlene: "A soldier in the midst of a military sex change, can certainly face some challenges, today we are going to hear the remarkable story, of 35 year old Sgt. Sylvia Durand , whose military funded sex change has caused some outrage among Canadians. Sgt. Durand will talk to us today from Ottawa, in her very first television interview, since news of her approved operation became public, I would like to welcome Sgt. Durand, Hi there!"

Sgt. Durand: "Hi."

Arlene: "Were you surprised that the military agreed to pay for the operation?"

Sgt. Durand: "No I'm not surprised at all, I just brought the request in as I thought it was the proper thing to do, and they just evaluated all, the different aspects of it, and they said, they brought in recommendations, and they said yes, this is things than can be done through the Forces."

Arlene: "Ok, let's talk about some of the background now because it's very confusing for a lot of people, because we hear so many terms, you were how long, eighteen years in the Army ? What did you do for that time ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Well, I am a radio operator, which means that I'm working in the telecommunications field ."

Arlene: "Have you done any combat .. any .."

Sgt. Durand: "No, not for me, but I was involved in operations left and right, I did stuff, not directly in the field but really close to it."

Arlene: "Ok, now the terms of this, what exactly ... obviously you have to be diagnosed for the Military to approve the operation, what was the diagnosis ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Ok, you have to go through four assessments done by a psychiatrist which is qualified in the domain, when it's done actually, that person puts the diagnosis on top of that, and at that point, the protocol starts."

Arlene: "Ok, and the protocol, you mean the hormone treatments?"

Sgt. Durand: "No, no! It doesn't start with that .. it starts with one year of ah ..living as much as possible in the other gender, but, during the day, you just go to work as a normal male, and the second year you start your hormone treatment, and the third and fourth year, you do your real life experience thing, which means that you have to live twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, as a female like in my case, or as a female to male as a male ."

Arlene: "So obviously for most of these years, these eighteen years, you went to work and you were part of the Army, knowing there was something different about you, how was that tough to handle, considering you were in the Army, the last bastion of maledom ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Well the one thing which is important here, is to like what you're doing, which is the case for me right now, the main thing also is to concentrate on what you have to do, and this I think helped me going through everything so far ."

Arlene: "How was it for you though, obviously you had a secret for a long time, how did you keep that secret ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Oh, that was extremely difficult, but finally I was hiding stuff left and right, and at the moment I needed to dress up, then I was going to those different places, and I was doing it ."

Arlene: "Did anybody recognize you from the Army ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Actually no, for one reason, because I was not doing it for anybody , I was staying in that small area, I was going in, and that was it ."

Arlene: "Are you married ?"

Sgt. Durand: "I was but I am divorced now ."

Arlene: "Ok, so you had the secret from

your marriage .. do you have any children ?"

Sgt. Durand: "I have two."

Arlene: "How did your family handle this news ?"

Sgt. Durand: "It's actually .. it was difficult at the beginning like you can imagine, but, with time .. I think time is the most important thing in this, and right now everything is going extremely well with my family, my Mom, Dad, and Brothers, and everybody."

Arlene: "People are quite understanding."

Sgt. Durand: "Oh yes they are ."

Arlene: "What a lot of people don't realize though, is that this is a diagnosed medical condition isn't it"

Sgt. Durand: "Yes it is ."

Arlene: "How did it feel to be you before this ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Well, you know when you feel like there is something different, you try to put the finger on it but you can't really describe what you're feeling, it's really undermining, but after you start searching for answers, and you finally find the answer on that, and everything falls into place."

Arlene: "What was it like for you, I mean we talked earlier about keeping a secret in the military, but, weren't you frightened that if somebody found out, I mean we hear about all these horror stories about what happens in the Army ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Again, everything that was done like, for me, was not done in the military, so I was really careful about how I was handling the thing ."

Arlene: "Ok, what did you do the first day you came to the Army dressed up as a woman ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Oh, that was so much of a relief, like to be myself finally, and to talk to people, and to just do what I normally do but to do it as myself, that was just great!"

Arlene: "How was it that day, you had to be scared, you had to be nervous walking into the Army, one day you're wearing pants and the next day you're wearing a ladies outfit ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Ya, actually that was pretty scary, but the people around me helped me go through that day without too much of a problem, and, at the end of the day for sure, I was exhausted, but that was so great, so neat, to finally live as myself."

Arlene: "Even if it's a bit frightening, because certainly I mean, there must have been taunts ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Oh there's so many things that were done at the moment, that were said at the moment, but you know, you have to go over that, if you want to go somewhere, you have to go over that and you have to carry on, because at that point I would not be sitting right in front of you right now ."

Arlene: "How are the other people handling it now, I mean that you're working, I mean how is the Army taking this news, because it was quite a controversial operation announced that it was going to be paid for by the military ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Ya, actually at the beginning, again, it was the same thing, the same situation all over the place, as soon as they saw me come into work dressed in my female uniform, at that point, people were feeling like a bit uncomfortable when I was around, but as soon as they saw that it was the same person .. I'm not changing my way of talking, my way of dealing with problems, my way of laughing, my way of telling my bad jokes, and stuff like that, I'm the same, so at that point they said, well! it's no big deal!"

Arlene: "Were there any times you were frightened, did anyone ever threaten you ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Nope, not at all ."

Arlene: "When did you first notice that you felt more like a woman than a man ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Well I knew I was different at my early age, around five or six, but, at that point you cannot put words on that until you arrive at teenage years, and since, still, at that point, I didn't know exactly at that point still, so I had to do some research around age twenty, and twenty five, and this is where I found everything about it."

Arlene: "I gotta ask you, I don't know ...if you felt that way, why the heck did you go in the Army?"

Sgt. Durand: "Well you know, 50% of all Transsexuals are joining the Army .. to try .."

Arlene: "Really ?"

Sgt. Durand: "Oh yes, and .."

Arlene: "Why ?"

Sgt. Durand: "For one reason, we try to prove ourselves, that we can do a really hard thing, that is really male, so we are following what society is asking us to do which is being a male ."

Arlene: "So it's a way of kind of dealing with the situation, you feel if you get in, and you do this really male thing, maybe you get rid of it, or cure yourself, is that what you're saying?"

Sgt. Durand: "Yes it is ."

Arlene: "So despite all the challenges and despite all the criticism, it's worth it for you?"

Sgt. Durand: "Oh yes!"

Arlene: "Ok, I would like to thank you so much for joining us, we appreciate it, it takes a lot of courage to come on National TV and talk about what you've been through, we appreciate it, and good luck to you"

Sgt. Durand: "Well it's my pleasure!"

Arlene: "Thank you very much!"

[This interview was edited for reasons of space.]

Go Ask Lynnie

Q: What are the best products for filling in eyebrows without looking overly dramatic and fake? I've tried using a pencil and it looks too harsh. I also want something fast and easy. What do you recommend?

A: To keep your brows from looking fake and overly made-up, always use small,light strokes of brow color so it looks more like hair than a dark line. I prefer brow powders to pencils because they are easier to control and look less severe. Here are a few I recommend:

Hard Candy Training Brow

Training Brow comes with two brow powder shades, a mini angled brush, mini mascara wand brush, and mini tweezers all in a small, square mirrored compact. This kit is perfect for travel and fits easily into a purse or makeup bag. The brushes are pretty small and really shouldn't replace full sized brushes for everyday use, but for travel, it's perfect. The two powder shades let you mix and match or blend the two to create the best color for your brows.

The Body Shop Eyebrow Makeup

Eyebrow Makeup is a waxy powder that comes in a refillable case with a small mirror and angled brush. The included brush is fine for travel or touch-ups away from home, but for everyday use at home, I'd use a thinner brush for more precision and control, like MAC's #22 or Stila's #10.

Stila Brow Filler or Brow Definer

Although these colors look just like eye shadows, they actually have more pigment, so you need less and the color will last longer. Just like other powders, simply fill in the bare spots of your brows with a small amount of color applied with a stiff, angled brush. These two shades from Stila are natural and go well with most coloring.After applying the color, brush through it with an old toothbrush, a clean mascara wand style brush (MAC #24, for example), or a stiff, angled makeup brush. Finally, set the color with a coat of a clear brow gel like Origins Brow Fix to keep the hairs in place. You can even do the gel by itself if you don't need or want any color.

.Q: What mascaras are really the best, both from bargain and expensive brands?

A: Mascara can be a very personal cosmetic, but I have some definite favorites! Whether you prefer thickening, lengthening, or just basic defining, here is my complete list of tested mascaras, including a handy rating system.

Rating System Key

**** Simply the Best. Don't leave home without it.
*** Really great and worth hunting down.
** Good, but Pretty Basic.
People actually buy this?

Simply the Best

**** Bobbi Brown (both defining or thickening formulas)
**** Chanel Instant Lash
**** Max Factor 2000 Calorie

Really Great

*** Jane Flashes
*** Chanel Sculpting Mascara Extreme Length
*** Maybelline Volum Express
*** Almay Amazing Lash Waterproof
*** M Professional
*** Maybelline Lash by Lash
*** Lancome Definicils
*** Estee Lauder More Than Mascara

Good but Pretty Basic

** Stila
** L'Oreal Lash Out
** Nat Robbins Stay Put
** BeneFit
** Mary Kay Conditioning
** English Ideas Duo Lash
** Estee Lauder Lash Luxe
** MAC

People Actually Buy This?

Jane Outer Limits
Naturistics Long Shot lengthening mascara
Maybelline Great Lash
Garden Botanika
Cover Girl Natural Lash Darkener

When it comes to mascara, try a few brands to see what suits your eyes the best. A good mascara shouldn't clump, smear, cake, flake, or look spiky, and it doesn't have to cost a fortune. One last tip: always replace your mascara every 3-4 months to prevent eye infections, especially for sensitive eyes and contact lens wearers.

Q: I have very visible pores on my nose and cheeks. How can I get rid of them?

A: Which do you want first - the good news or the bad news?

The bad news is that you can't get rid of your pores, and you can't permanently change their size. This is a myth, along with the notion that pores somehow open and close - they don't. Your pore size is hereditary, meaning that if your parents have large pores, it's very possible that you will, too. Pores also appear open and enlarged when they are full of oil or debris. When the pore is clean and free of excess oil and dirt, it appears closed. Cleansers, toners, and masks can only temporarily tighten the skin, making the pores appear smaller but not really changing them at all. Sorry :(The good news is that there are products you can use and techniques you can try to make your pores appear smaller and less visible. The effects are temporary, but can make your skin look smoother at least for a short time.

Just about any clay facial mask will clean your skin and make it feel tighter and the pores appear smaller, so consider treating your skin to one once or twice a week. A few that I like are Beauty Without Cruelty Purifying Facial Mask, Estee Lauder Almond Clay Pack, Kiss My Face Deep Pore Cleansing Masque, Better Botanicals Refining Facial Mask, and Garden Botanika

Skin Renewing Clarifying Facial Mask.

Keep your skin clean. This doesn't mean excessive washing or scrubbing (cleanse twice a day, gently scrub only once or twice a week), but at least make sure to remove all your makeup and wash your face every night before you go to bed, and try to avoid cosmetics and skin care products that make your skin breakout (the products that do can be different for everybody).

Use makeup as sparingly as possible. Heavy foundations can settle in your pores and make already large pores appear larger by caking on the skin. Be meticulous in your application: apply foundation with a clean makeup sponge and blend carefully for a smooth, even finish. When you apply powder, use a large fluffy brush and be sure to dust off any excess from your skin.

Keep your makeup tools like sponges and brushes very clean. Any bacteria, oil, or dirt they may carry can settle in your pores every time you apply makeup. I recommend washing your brushes every two weeks in a mild hair shampoo or brush cleaner, and sponges as soon as all sides are dirty (also in a mild liquid soap or shampoo).

Q: Now that winter is coming ,I know my skin will got dry and flaky. Is there anything I can do to make it look healthy again?

A: When the temperature outside starts to drop, it's the perfect time to update your skin care routine to keep you looking healthy and radiant all winter long. Falling temperatures and brisk winds outside, together with dry heat inside, makes for an ever-changing environment that can create a seriously confused face. Combination and even oily skin can turn dry and flaky, and already dry skin needs extra care to protect and soothe it. Here are a few changes you can make to keep your skin happy.

Use a gentle cleanser that takes off all your makeup. "Gentle" means that it doesn't burn or sting, and it doesn't leave your face feeling taut. Choose one that takes off all of your makeup and rinses off easily with lukewarm water. For this time of year, unless your face is very oily, consider using a lotion or milky cleanser rather than one that foams or lathers. Foaming agents can strip the moisture right out of your skin. A few to consider are: Cetaphil lotion cleanser, Beauty Without Cruelty Herbal Cream Facial Cleanser, BeneFit All Types Wash, Remede Milky Wash, and Garden Botanika Chamomile Cleansing Milk.

If you use a toner, choose one that soothes without overdrying. This means no alcohol! If you have oily skin that stays oily through the winter, look for a toner with witch hazel instead of alcohol for a thorough clean without the harshness. For every skin type, choose a toner that contains water-binding ingredients like glycerin, sorbitol, and sodium PCA, and soothing plant oils like calendula, chamomile, and elderflower (unless you are sensitive to plant oils). A few to consider are: Shiseido Vital Perfection Balancing Softener, Circle of Beauty Skinplicity Skin Refiner for dry skin, Beauty Without Cruelty Balancing Facial Toner, Body Shop Hydrating Freshener, and Garden Botanika Elderflower or Honey and Rosewater Toning Lotions.

Heavy creams are good, just use them with care on your face. Heavy, emollient moisturizers create a protective barrier from the cold for your hands and body, but make sure the one you choose for your face isn't too oily or greasy - it can cause breakouts on even the driest skin. Look for soothing ingredients like hyaluronic acid, aloe vera gel, propylene glycol (a water binder), sodium PCA, and allantoin. A few to consider are: BeneFit Daily Vitamin Creme, Lite Cosmetics Revive Face Moisturizer, Kiehl's Ultra Facial Moisturizer, Oil of Olay Sensitive Skin Replenishing Cream, Lancome Bienfait Total, Basis Face the Day lotion, and Estee Lauder DayWear.

You still need to exfoliate, but be gentle!

Gritty facial scrubs might be fine in the summer when skin tends to be oilier and more resilient, but during the winter, an alpha or beta hydroxy product is a better choice. These chemical exfoliants gently loosen dead cells from the skin's surface rather than physically scraping them off. A few to consider are: BeneFit Seven% cream, Neutrogena Healthy Skin lotion, Avon All-in-One Perfecting Complex, Dermalogica Skin Renewal Booster, Oil of Olay Age Defying Daily Renewal Cream, Alpha Hydrox 8% AHA Lotion, and Pond's Age Defying Complex.

The right mask can make your skin feel like new. Choose a mask that replenishes the moisture you lose from being outside, or from too much dry heat. Hydrating masks are great for a quick rush of moisture for thirsty skin - just make sure it's not too greasy. A few to consider are: Body Shop Intense Moisture Mask, BeneFit Seaweed Mud Mask, Dermalogica Skin Hydrating Masque, and Clarins Revitalizing Moisture Mask.

Professor in Drag

by Jacqueline Swartz, Salon Magazine

www.salonmagazine.com

Feb. 24, 1999

Late in the term of his second-year philosophy course on gender and sexuality, York University professor Michael Gilbert asks his class if they'd like to have a Q&A session with someone who is transgendered. Sure, says almost everyone in the Toronto class of 90 students. All semester they have been talking about what it means to be men and women, how gender relates to sex; they've discussed marriage, various kinds of love, what it means to be gay. Now they'll have the chance to see a "living deconstruction of gender dichotomy," as Gilbert puts it. Those who feel uncomfortable about seeing such a person, he warns, should not attend the next class.

A few days later, Brooklyn-born, street-smart Michael Gilbert, tenured professor and alpha male, shows up for class as Miqqi Alicia. "Her" walk is more tentative than the lumbering gait of Gilbert. She is dressed in a demure skirt and sweater and wears low heels. There is a glint of earrings underneath her shoulder-length salt and pepper hair, now released from its usual ponytail. Her legs are shapely, her nails are well-manicured ovals, but the whole effect is more Mrs. Doubtfire than RuPaul. Miqqi will never quite make it as a knockout woman. Also, the well-credentialed professor is sensitive enough to dress appropriately. "In class I follow the unwritten female professor rules: Display few bright colors and no skin."

As she enters, the students giggle and whisper. There's a buzz. One student walks in late and practically trips on her double take. Miqqi talks for10 or 15 minutes to let the class get used to the sight of him, now her. Transgender, she explains, is an umbrella term that covers anyone who is uncomfortable with, objects to or plays with his or her birth-designated gender.(By contrast, transsexuals believe they truly belong to the opposite sex.)

"The male cross-dresser doesn't believe he's a woman. I'm a man, with a man's body ... and I don't want anyone to touch it with a scalpel," he/she tells the students with a little grin of self-diminishing femininity.

The rapt expressions of the students show they're on his side. So do their comments. A clean-cut-looking male student points out that all professors impose their styles and lives on their class, from their worn tweed jackets with leather patches to the endless

heterosexual references to wives and children. "The creepiness factor was avoided," noted a female student. "It's not sexual, he's not being caught going through his wife's underwear or wearing garters and heels." Indeed, Miqqi Alicia is more toned down Michael Gilbert than drag queen. The voice is softer but not really higher, the gestures are less assertive—Miqqi flutters her hands where Michael would saw the air with his arm to make a point.

Later, over coffee, Gilbert meets with me to discuss the video that recorded Miqqi's classroom appearance. Confident, jovial and intense, he wants me to know that his students are impressed that he's willing to share himself with them. Lately he's been sharing himself with more than students: Print stories and TV pieces on Gilbert have appeared in the mainstream media during the past year. The self-outing was intentional -- Gilbert believes that if you have tenure, you ought to say what's unpopular, especially if you're part of a marginalized group.

"I have the obligation to expose myself as transgendered in order that others, for whom the risk might be greater, can also do so," he says.

Gilbert is part of a wave of gender-bending academics who put their bodies on the line. That once meant facing a phalanx of cops because you wanted to help stop the Vietnam War or Southern racism. But in the world of paradigm-rocking academia, the focus of revolutionary energies has irrevocably changed. While once campus radicals addressed explicitly political and civil rights issues -- racism, the widening gap between rich and poor, homelessness or America's military adventures -- now they often battle on behalf of "the body" and the elusive experience of inhabiting a sexual persona.

Born of postmodernism's disillusionment with scholarly detachment, the contemporary study of sexuality allows scholars to become players rather than simply distant observers or temporary tourists. Michel Foucault became both celebrated and notorious for his participation in San Francisco's gay bathhouse culture. Judith Haberstam, a wiry, suit-wearing, butch theorist at the University of California at San Diego, offers both a visual and conceptual understanding of gender fluidity. As Michael/Miqqi sums it up: "I'm living it, not just writing about it. I'm in the first person."

By teaching his class en femme, Gilbert becomes a walking illustration of one of the tenets that underpins much of his scholarship: Gender is just a construct propped up by deeply imbedded conditioning. And what is constructed can be deconstructed; the fact that you're born one sex shouldn't limit your freedom to cross over into another. His Miqqi outings are as political as they are pedagogical. Cross-dressers are often ignored, he con-

tends, living in the shadow of surgically altered transsexuals or flamboyant drag queens. To bolster courage and self-esteem among his kind, he edits a magazine called the Monarch: Canada's Transgender Reader and organizes support groups.

If all this sounds a little fringy, it's important to remember that Gilbert is not a recent product of an obscure postmodern-leaning school. He has strong establishment credentials: tenure, a C.V. heavy with publications in both traditional and trendy academic journals and more than 25 years of university teaching. After getting a Ph.D. at Ontario's University of Waterloo, and joining the philosophy department of York University in 1975, Gilbert specialized in critical reasoning. His first book, "How To Win an Argument" (now reprinted by John Wiley), was published in 1979. Since then, he has written two novels, one of which, "The Office Party," a psychological drama about a man who takes his co-workers hostages and has no demands, was made into a film in Canada in 1988 called "Hostile Takeover."

Like many who have wedded their sexuality and their scholarship, Gilbert's academic work in transgender issues only evolved after he come out personally. In 1984, when he was 39, his wife died. "I realized that life wasn't a dress rehearsal," he says. "I began to come out, and I felt less of a separation between my cross-dressing self and my academic self. I began to explore it philosophically."

His intellectual work around gender issues developed slowly as he built a bridge between his exploration of verbal disagreement and the incongruities of male and female styles of expression. In 1991, he started to work intensively on argumentation theory. In a paper titled "Coalescent Argumentation," he wrote about how seemingly divergent positions could be articulated and then joined: "I am concerned with exploring the ways in which people may disagree more effectively, and especially, with a greater possibility of ending inagreement." Gradually, he became interested in the possibility of "coalescing" male and female stances, like two sides of an irresolvable argument finally communicating.

"I saw gender differences as relevant," Gilbert says, "particularly as Islipped from one gender to another -- I could feel them more vividly. If you survey the way men and women communicate, you can identify certain differences. Some are important. Women have a greater attunement to nonverbal communication, they can get beneath the surface."

Like the vast majority of cross-dressers, Gilbert is a heterosexual man, and aside from this little fetish, he has led a rather conventional life. He has spent most of his adulthood married (his current wife is his third) and with children (he has one biological child and three stepchildren). Seen within this context, Gilbert tends to view cross-dressing as a way of escaping the strictures of masculinity. "Imagine being an alpha male and being able to flip to being a beta female once in a while. It's a release, like a holiday." But this holiday, he's quick to add, is not some superficial day-trip; it goes much deeper than glammed-up drag. "If you are going to declare yourself a part- or full-time woman you have to go beyond appearances," he says.

Yet even within the process of building a new look, Gilbert finds fodder for thought. He approaches female garb and grooming with purpose and rationality: To learn make-up skills, he went to a MAC store for lessons. And as he carefully plans what he's going to wear, he's also pondering the meaning of male vs. female wardrobes. Why is it that women have an expanded gender wardrobe -- from jeans to slinky dresses -- while men are limited to dressing, as he calls it, en drab? "It's OK to go up the gender ladder but not down," he says. "In our society, you never do anything that diminishes your power."

He also claims that his time spent in feminine form has influenced his philosophical understandings of argumentation and competitiveness. When he's a woman, he says, power and winning become less important. This different sensibility, he notes, has seeped into his work. "My argumentation theory is now a blend of animus/anima, male/female."

Despite the explicitly political claims of such gender scholarship, however, it's difficult to see how such ideas can have a radical impact on what we already know about male and female communication. There are, after all, many female philosophers, linguists and rhetoricians who can attest to the distinctions between male and female speech and presentation. Moreover, it's just the sort of observation that hardly requires a Ph.D. What then, is the ultimate value of male philosophers who wear dresses and F/M transsexuals who teach anthropology? Aside from making the college campus a lively carnival of sexual diversity and challenged assumptions, aside from giving an intellectual voice to a sexually marginalized group, such radicalism largely evades old notions of collective activism, merely articulating a very specific set of experiences.

What happens when all the transgendered exit their closets, as Gilbert is admirably helping them to do? What will their liberation mean to anyone who isn't another secret cross-dresser? It's a philosophical question that Gilbert and others in the transgender movement have yet to answer.

Jacqueline Swartz is a writer living in Toronto.

NEW HAIR REMOVAL TECHNIQUE

[This was found in the soc.support.transgendered news group.]

I found the most amazing hair removal product recently at the Tran-$ website. It's TOTALLY permanent and doesn't require electrolysis.

Thanks to the latest advances in microengineering and the Tran-$ Corrosives Research Department engineering team , hair removal is as modern as today and as forward thinking as the Spanish Inquisition!

Here's how it works!

Migrant farm workers and Southern U.S. prisoner highway department personnel are shrunk to 1000% of their original size (through patented LowLife Abduction and Squeeze-M technologies) and suspended in a gelatinous anesthetic paste, which serves to nourish your face, the workers, and make Pouraway completely (see package insert) painless.

After cleansing your face with all-natural battery acid (found in cars that grow on southern front yards) you'll feel the tingling of skin that's SUPER CLEAN, while it works to remove 90% of troublesome skin.

Dry face with our 00 grit abrasive SandSheets, then apply a coat of FreeLabor gel to the entire face.

Workers grab their tools and do the work from here...just relax, and close your eyes (hopefully you've already done that...if not, it'll be unnecessary at this point).

While you rest hundreds of workers, armed with almost microscopic fence hole borers, prepare your skin for the permanent smoothness.

Choose your favorite facial expression at this time...one that will express what you want to project permanently, while the workers fill the boresites with Advanced Sebum Replacement (a naturally occurring sand/plastic mixture).

(Note...Taking a shower at this time will extend the process at least 24 hours while workers seek cover, then go home for the day (usually in the septum or mouth). Do not drink alcoholic beverages or nasally introduced drugs such as cocaine, crank, or, heroin at this time...this will further extend the treatment due to workers "calling in sick" (no, that isn't your inner dialogue your hearing the next morning).

If all goes well, and unionization is avoided, your face should be ready in approximately about a couple of weeks.

The price? Surprisingly affordable for those who do not yet have a second mortgage. Simply wash what's left of the gel and effluent with boiling water and VOILA! A NEW WOMAN!

Pouraway is GUARANTEED, or your check will be cheerfully cashed!

For more info see our website at goturbux@bendover.com or call toll-free 1 (888) GOT-URBUX

Hugs, Manuel Noriega, Trans-$ Industries "Better Living Through Robbery"

Knock-Down-Drag-Out

by Karen Houppert, Village Voice

January 20 - 26, 1999

Cops Were Called To Help Jolea Lamot. Then They Learned She Was a Transsexual.

It was every mother's nightmare. Police were at the door demanding to speak to her child- and they were pissed. "Why didn't you just tell me it was a fuckin' trans-testicle?" one cop allegedly shouted. "Where is he? She? Whatever it is?"

"It" was Nancy Lamot's transsexual daughter, JoLea. On the night of November 24, Nancy Lamot had called 911 from her Claremont Village home in the Bronx, fearing that JoLea was ill. But when Nancy Lamot led the cops to the bathroom where her 27-year-old daughter stood, chaos ensued.

Though cops tell a different story, witnesses say the police began beating JoLea Lamot, hitting her and slamming her against the wall. Family members tried to protect her. Before the night was over, cops had used Mace, drawn a gun, and assaulted residents; three Lamot family members and a neighbor were taken away in handcuffs- all were treated at a hospital- and th two arresting cops were treated for "bruising and swelling."

Nancy Lamot claims her family was attacked by a brutal and homophobic cop. For their part, cops say the family locked them inside the apartment and quickly became violent.

Last week, in what is for her a final insult, Nancy Lamot appeared in court, charged with criminally assaulting a police officer- a violent felony charge that could land her 15 years in prison.

It all began around 5 p.m. on November 24 when Evanna Black, a friend and also a transsexual, stopped by to visit JoLea.

According to Black, she and Nancy Lamot had trouble rousing JoLea, who was napping. JoLea had taken several Benadryl earlier to fend off an allergy attack, and the women began to worry that JoLea had taken too many or that she was having a reaction to the Benadryl and hormones she was on. Nancy Lamot made a call to 911. In the panic of the moment, she inadvertently referred to JoLea as her "son."

Born "Jimmy," JoLea Lamot only began living her life as a woman a year and a half ago. While Nancy Lamot loves and supports her daughter, now a junior at New Rochelle College, she still stumbles over pronouns from time to time. The lapses are usually insignificant.

By the time EMS arrived, JoLea Lamot was feeling a little better. Though the family thought she was in the bathroom, JoLea had actually wandered out of the apartment to visit friends upstairs. Paramedics said she was probably okay if she was up and about, but that the family should find her just to make sure she wasn't still disoriented.

Moments later, Officers Peter ngarino and David Gilman arrived, alerted by the 911 call. When Nancy Lamot explained what had happened, the cops offered to help search for JoLea. They left the apartment.

As tey walked down the hall, they unknowingly passed JoLea, whom Black was bringing back to the apartment. "Hello, ladies," they said.

As JoLea entered the apartment, Black hung back to tell the officers that JoLea was the person they were looking for and that everything seemed to be okay.

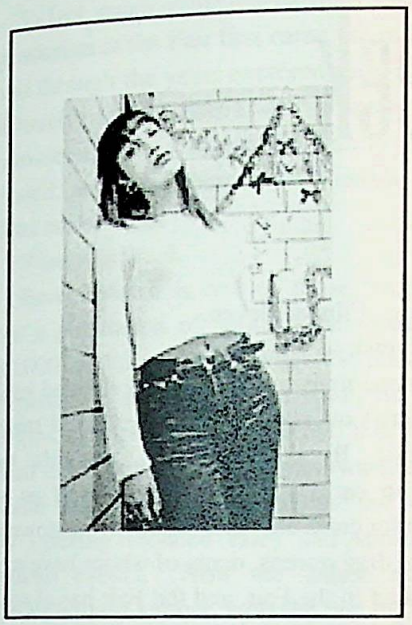
According to Black, Officer Ungarino flipped out at the thought that he'd been duped by the "ladies."

"What is it? A he? A she? An it?" Black says he demanded.

"I said, 'It's a he, but she lives her life as a she.' "

That's when Ungarino began ranting about "fuckin' trans-testicles."

As the officers reentered the apartment, Black followed them, worried that there



might be trouble. The cops found JoLea in the bathroom. "What the hell's wrong with you?" Black heard them ask. "You're coming with us."

When they began trying to cuff JoLea, everyone in the apartment- Nancy Lamot, her 24-year-old son John Baez, her 13-year-old daughter Mary, a 10-year-old neighbor Veronica Castro, a 47-year-old neighbor Ricardo Perez, and Black- grew confused. "Why are you arresting her? She didn't commit any crime," Black said to the cops. JoLea, worried about the silicone surgery she'd had on her breasts, hips, and face, cowered in the corner of the bathroom saying, "Don't touch me."

"They slammed her into the mirror, then the wall, and then she fell into the bathtub. Nancy tried to come to her assistance, yelling to 'Leave her alone, leave her alone.' At that point, one of the officers used his radio to call 'Officer down! Need assistance.' " Black recalled. Frightened, Black called 911, saying, " 'They're attacking my friend. Oh, please help, they're throwing her.' And they said, 'Police officers are already on the scene.' I said, 'I know, they're the ones hurting her.' "

But the cops say they were only trying to help. Describing JoLea as an "emotionally disturbed person," the officers seemed determined to take her in for psychiatric help. Ungarino and Gilman say in court papers that they were locked in the apartment "against their will which did expose both informants [police officers] to serious physical injury, and the defendants [Lamots] prevented the informant's [sic] from attending to an emotionally disturbed person, Jimmy Lamont [JoLea Lamot]." Insisting that the Lamots punched and kicked them, the cops listed their injuries. "They did attack the informants, causing P.O. Ungarino to suffer a strained back along with bruising and swelling, and P.O. Gilman did suffer a bruised shoulder and that both informant's [sic] did experience substantial pain and sufferring [sic] and both informant's [sic] were treated at a local bronx [sic] hospital for their respective injuries."

But others present that night in the apartment dispute this.

Although Michael Spiegel, an attorney for the Lamot family, advised his clients not to speak to the press, 13-year-old Mary Lamot confirms Black's version of events. "After police realized JoLea was a transsexual they went all out of proportion and started handcuffing her," Mary recalls. "They pushed her up against the wall and told my brother and my mother to get away. The cops were yelling and she was telling them to get off her. I seen them spray Mace at my mother and my mother told me to 'get back, get back,' so I just ran into the bedroom. I was crying like crazy."

JoLea was taken to Bronx-Lebanon for psychiatric evaluation. (She was released the next day after talking to a psychiatrist.) Nancy Lamot, her son John, and her neighbor Ricardo Perez were arrested for "gang assault," "assault on a police officer," "resisting arrest," "unlawful imprisonment," and "harassment in the second degree."

Queried about whether there was any evidence of police misconduct in this case, Steven Reed, director of public information for the Bronx D.A.'s office, would say only that they were investigating the matter. "We just became aware of the allegations against the officers last week," Reed explained, "and the entire matter is under review."

Spiegel, who will be filing a civil rights suit on behalf of the Lamots, says the cops' version of events is "absurd" and points out that police found no weapons or drugs in the apartment- indeed, no reason for the Lamots to lock them in the apartment and proceed with an unprovoked attack. "This is a family that called 911 for medical help," he said, "and ended up being attacked".

Designer hopes to fill void styling women's clothes for men

The Sunday Telegraph

A former nurse in London has been given a $7,000 loan by Prince's Trust, a charity set up by the Prince of Wales to help young people open their own enterprises, to launch a fashion business designing "respectable and elegant"' clothes for male transvestites. Lisa Wright, of Tranzit,, said she was moved by the plight of men longing to 1ook like women but who have to squeeze into ill-fitting, un-flattering, and "sleazy garments. "The majority of transvestites are married men with good jobs who just like to dress up as women for fun," she said. "I'm trying to get away from the stigma that they are all weirdos!'

She came up with the idea after meet-ing transvestites at nightclubs in London where she was struck by their lack of dress sense. "I want to help them get away from the tarty, seedy image that they seem to have by teaching them how to dress properly and look respectable," explained Miss Wright, a single parent who had been unemployed for several years before getting help from the trust. "Women are built completely differently to women and they need to be made to look a little more ladylike!"

She gained a National Vocational Qualification in fashion and did a business course. Tutors encour-aged her to apply to the Prince's trust for funding. While the trust will not support any project linked to religion, politics, or the sex industry; its rules do not preclude businesses providing services for transvestites. Garments will range from cocktail dresses and ball gowns to casual wear, all in high-quality Italian fabrics. "Transvestite clothes need to be specially made, with less room round the bottom and bigger shoulders," she explained. "Many of my designs include chokers, which cover up the Adam's apple. I want to make clothes that flatter them with-out all that padding, a more natural look. Nothing is going to change their bodies, but we can make them look better. If they're going to dress as women, they must learn how' to dress properly. We don't want transvestites to frighten children as they walk down the street."

Miss Wright has used her loan to buy a sewing machine and install telephone and fax lines. Her designs will be marketed through the Internet and a mail-order catalogue. "My boyfriend is going to be one of the models,"she said "He looks great in women's clothing. Sometimes he makes me feel quite jealous."

Fantasia Fair/Transgender Week

by Dallas Denny

[Among members of Xpressions who will be attending FanFair/Transgender Week are Pamela, Donna, Lyn, Kayla, Cynthia, Karen Fox, Miqqi Alicia, Kimberly, Paddy, and others we've not yet heard about.]

For the past 24 years in the resort town of Provincetown on the very tip of Cape Cod there has been every October a wonderful, week-long transgender event. I'm talking, of course, about Fantasia Fair.

Those who have been to Fantasia Fair know it's a full-immersion experience, with plenty of hand-holding for first-timers and an entire trans-friendly town available for those with more cross dressing experience. There are workshops, seminars, luncheons, banquets, a first-class all-trans cabaret show, and a Fantasy Ball at which it is difficult to tell the townies from the FanFair participants. Those who've attended past Fairs know that unlike the typical transgender event based in a hotel in a big city, Fantasia Fair spills out into the streets of the ever-welcoming Provincetown, that gayest of gay resorts. There is an entire village to see and in which to be seen, and transfolk are visible on every street, in every guest house, every boutique, every nightclub, and every restaurant.

Expensive?

Those who have attended Fantasia Fair and many who haven't know that going to the Fair can cost several thousand dollars, what with airfare, registration and lodging (lodging for 8 nights is included with registration), and mad money. In fact, Fantasia Fair has had a reputation as an event for wealthy, closeted cross dressers. That's not true on either account. First, FanFair is in fact a diverse event, and second, it's expensive only because it lasts a week rather than two or three days, and because lodging is included in the registration fee. The Fair does cost more in absolute terms, but on a per diem basis it's less expensive than the Be-All and only a few dollars more than Southen Comfort. In recent years Fair organizers have worked especially hard to cut the costs and give attendees a lot of bang for their buck. For instance, the Fair includes at no extra charge two evening banquets, six luncheons, a welcome buffet and a goodbye brunch, a church supper, a wine and cheese reception, a buffet after the Follies, and of course, a wide variety of workshops, as many as 16 per day.

But there's just something about one big sum that puts people off. They don't seem to mind spending money so long as it's broken down into digestible lumps. Most folks would rather pay $300 for registration and $85 a night for four nights lodging at a gender conference than $580 for registration which includes the room, even though the latter represents a savings of $60.

Certainly, the check one must write for a week at Fantasia Fair is a sizeable one. Consequently, FanFair has always been a small event, with attendance most years between 125 and 150. But that's about to change. Film at eleven.

Diversity

At one time, our community divided itself into drag queens, cross dressers, and transsexuals. By those obsolete standards, the Fair, in early years, promoted itself as an event for cross dressers. But Provincetown is full of drag queens, many of whom have participated in the Fair, and the Fair has always included transsexuals and people who would today identify as transgender. In fact, there's a classic 1980 Playboy article in which author D. Keith Mano talks about romancing a transwoman who was clearly on hormones. Throughout the nineties, the Fair has become an increasingly more diverse event. There are lots of transsexuals; in fact, a first-timer at last year's Fair told me she found a higher percentage of transsexuals at the Fair than at any other event. There has been a sizeable contingent of gay cross dressers throughout the nineties, and the Fair has begun to aggressively recruit FtMs. There are also many people who occupy gender territory somewhere between the classic definitions of cross dresser and transsexual.

In fact, many of the transsexuals and transgenderists at the Fair first came out in Ptown and through the years explored their identity through transgenderism and in many cases transsexualism. Many eventually transitioned, and more than a few FanFair attendees are post-op.

Women's Week

Provincetown is one of those burgs that has a population of 5000 in the winter and 80,000 in the summer. After the middle of September, tourism drops and the town begins to wind down. At least, that's what used to happen. The Provincetown Business Guild has worked hard to extend the season by offering reduced rates and sponsoring special events. Now the season extends through mid-October, with the last big event being Women's Week, during which some 6000 lesbians come to town. Fantasia Fair, which is of course, a much smaller event, gears up as Women's Week is winding down— but of course 125 transpeople cannot match the spending power of 6000 women, no matter how many boutiques they hit. A few establishments, hoping to separate Fantasia Fair attendees from their money, stay open a few days after Women's Week, but the town visibly shuts down throughout the Fair.

To attend Women's Week one need only show up. There is no registration, no requirement that one book a room. For those who can fly, drive, take the bus, or walk to Provincetown, there are thousands of women with whom to socialize and dozens of events to attend: concerts, cabaret, comedy acts, workshops, plays, and a prom. Provincetown Reservations sells tickets to the events with a cost; those who have no money are still able to participate in the many free events—and of course, are free to socialize with the other 5999 women. It's a powerful experience to see Commercial Street packed wall-to-wall with lesbians of every age, size, and social class, all having a good time.

If the Women's Week formula works well, as can be attested to by the ever-increasing numbers of women in attendance, why couldn't we do the same for transpeople?

Transgender Week

Fantasia Fair is too special an experience to be the sole property of the well-to-do. Throughout the nineties the organizers have worked hard to reduce the cost of the event, reducing it from 10 days to 7, bargaining

hard with bed and breakfast owners and restaurant managers, shaving a dollar here and there from the cost. But there's only so far one can go by such methods. Last year, the Board of Directors of the Outreach Institute, which sponsors Fantasia Fair, came up with the novel idea of gradually transforming the Fair into Transgender Week, using Women's Week as a model towards which to work.

The decision of the organizers to transform Fantasia Fair into Transgender Week was not uncontroversial. Some of the long-time attendees have been concerned that the specialness of Fantasia Fair would be lost—and let me assure you, Fantasia Fair is indeed a most special event. How will Transgender Week be able to keep the maintain the Fair's specialness? How will very frightened first-timers be made gently comfortable with house system alive—the house system being

So, this year, Fantasia Fair's 25th, we will see the last of the old Fantasia Fair and the first Transgender Week. It will be a nostalgic time, and a time of new hope.

Transsexual Economist Argues That Gender Determines Approach to Field

By LOUIS UCHITELLE

Deirdre McCloskey contends that women look at economics more realistically than men do, with a greater emphasis on family and the group.

June 19, 1999

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.—Michael Foley, third-generation owner of Foley Fish Co., as Boston Irish as the Kennedys and as charming, greeted Deirdre McCloskey with a kiss on the cheek and a gallantry. "You look better than the last time I saw you," he said. And Deirdre melted, hugging him in gratitude and relief.

They had played high school football together, these two 6-footers, and had gone on to Harvard, class of '64. They had seen each other at the 25th reunion in 1989. Deirdre—then Donald, still a man—took his wife and two children to those festivities. Now, at the 35th reunion, she arrived at the opening reception alone, her blond hair pinned up with a silver clasp, her outfit a black dress, black shawl, silver bracelets and pumps—and she ran almost immediately into her old pal Mike Foley, who put her at ease.

"I would prefer that there was a pill I could give to the world, and they would forget I had ever been a man," Ms. McCloskey said later. "But there isn't a pill, and since I want to continue in my profession, I must change people's minds."

Ms. McCloskey, who teaches at the University of Iowa and at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, is gradually becoming one of the most famous American transsexuals. That is partly because of her prominence as an economist and historian, but also because of her transition strategy. She has described her experience in many articles and talks, and in September the University of Chicago Press will publish "Crossing: A Memoir," a detailed account of her journey. Her hope is that through openness, frankness and constant repetition of her story, her reincarnation as a woman will be accepted as natural and healthy.

But if Ms. McCloskey has switched sexes successfully, she is still in the early stages of a second significant transition. After years of surgery, self-discipline, a facelift and hormones to alter her appearance, her voice, her mannerisms, her emotions and her sex organs, she is trying, at age 56, to make economists aware of just how much gender affects their thinking. Men dominate the profession, occupying most of the tenured professorships, but Ms. McCloskey argues that women by temperament and cultural conditioning make better economists. They tend to perceive the economy differently from men, she says, and more realistically.

"There is this romantic idea among men that they are free agents in the marketplace, without any ties except to their individual selves," Ms. McCloskey said. "While men think of themselves in metaphors of competition, there is an assumption among women that we are together, helping each other survive." She added: "I was an aggressive, assertive male, and I felt comfortable. Now I am ashamed because that was so very macho."

Men, in this scheme, see an autonomous individual as the chief economic actor, each individual enhancing the marketplace by seeking his own pleasure or profit. Women, in contrast, are loving, flexible, graceful and caring, particularly for their children and for others within their families and social circles. They are more willing to act as a family unit or social group, subordinating their personal desires to the needs of the group.

Although Ms. McCloskey's unusual switch might make her seem the perfect case study to test whether gender affects thinking, her views raise eyebrows among some sister economists who resist any attempt to make their discipline a matter of gender. Indeed, the notion that men and women economists—or men and women scientists, historians or architects, for that matter—think differently has provoked heated debate.

Many female economists agree that differences exist but insist they are learned differences, imposed by a culture and a market economy that functions mostly in the male image, assigning different roles to the sexes and treating women less well than men. Given the opportunity, "men can do anything that women can do intellectually and emotionally, and vice versa," said Barbara Bergman, an economist at American University.

Ms. Bergman is a leader of a small group of feminist economists (including men as well as women) who concern themselves with the issues that put women at a disadvantage in the marketplace. Child care is one. So are unequal pay, breast-feeding while holding a job, caring for old parents and doing most of the housework. Deirdre McCloskey is trying to join herself to this group.

"Feminine gestures are not God's own creation," Ms. McCloskey acknowledges in her book. "This of course I know. The social construction of gender is, after all, something a gender-crosser comes to know with unusual vividness. She does it for a living."

But having gone through the very difficult process of switching sexes, Ms. McCloskey, who cross-dressed for decades before she finally declared herself a woman, has a lot invested in the joys of her new womanhood. Whatever their origin, she says, feminine feelings and behavior rarely show up in men and certainly not in male-dominated mainstream economics, which she likens to "boys playing games in a sandbox."

Clearly, she enjoyed her new womanhood at the reunion. Harvard in 1964 was all male, but Radcliffe women from that year also participated, and at many events Ms. McCloskey seemed to be just another aging, successful "Cliffie," in her case a good natured one, patient and sympathetic as a listener and quick to tell her story to puzzled classmates who, upon meeting her, vaguely remembered a male McCloskey in Adams House.

She had given some advance notice. "Are you sitting down?" she wrote in the reunion book, a collection of thumbnail updates, mailed to the alumni before their gathering. "I've become a woman. No joke. I've always wanted to, and finally in 1995 did it. Now 'becoming a woman' is in some senses impossible. I still have XY genes and, what is more important, a man's life up to age 53. But some things can be done, with the result a very happy and very tall woman."

By the night of the square dance, under a huge tent in Radcliffe Yard, she felt quite at

home as a woman, even having a tete-a-tete with a Radcliffe alumna whom Donald McCloskey had dated when they were college freshmen. And after the paper-plate dinner, Deirdre danced for two hours. She coaxed a shy man onto the floor as her partner, a librarian, who had not, as a Harvard student, known Donald McCloskey, or any Radcliffe girls for that matter.

"I felt, as I was being swung, like I was very much in the women's role," she said. "I felt pretty and feminine. That is a wonderful feeling, a tremendous feeling. Even saying to the men, 'Come on now, dance,' that sort of talk, that is a woman's activity, a mother's and a grandmother's. Women feel a responsibility for making social arrangements and men take them for granted."

Her memoir is laced with passages that view men and women as being locked into gender roles, the women's role being by far the more satisfying and desirable.

From women on Iowa's faculty, for example, she learned this rule:

"When you run into somebody, never rush by self-absorbed, as Donald did; always stop and chat." Or take this passage: "When the average grown-up woman leaves the table, she looks for stray cups to be washed, part of the cleaning, loving, caring that women are always doing half unconsciously."

Or this observation about herself: "Along with millions of other women in the world, she was sad watching the funeral of Princess Diana, in the coffee room of a motel in Dallas before electrolysis."

Or these nuances: "Women put their hands to their chests when speaking of themselves. Men barge through. Women look frequently at nonspeaking participants in a conversation. Men don't look at each other when talking."

Some female economists, citing such comments, call her a former man trying to teach women how to be women. "Deirdre is reprogramming herself as a woman, and that inevitably leads to a search for stereotypes," said Claudia Goldin, a Harvard economist and friend, acknowledging the criticism. Nancy Folbre, an economist at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, offers a different slant. If Ms. McCloskey's gender assignments seem exaggerated, Ms. Folbre said, they reflect her struggle to be "read" as a woman just when gender roles are becoming more androgynous.

No one has given Deirdre McCloskey more support through her gender-crossing than her 75-year-old mother, Helen McCloskey. She is the widow of a prominent Harvard professor, an expert on constitutional law who died of a heart attack in 1969, just as their eldest son, Donald, completed his Ph.D in economics at Harvard and joined the University of Chicago faculty.

Helen McCloskey admired her husband's

achievements, which she associated with maleness, and she sees in Deirdre the same "steely male intellectual quality" that her husband had, and Donald, too. Men, she argues, are the builders, the creators. She may be one herself. Left with an inadequate inheritance, Mrs. McCloskey, a housewife in marriage, has supported herself in widowhood by buying, fixing up and reselling 15 homes, living in them during the remodeling. Her latest acquisition, a two-bedroom house, is in Centreville on Cape Cod, and Deirdre visited on her way to the Harvard reunion. The subject of the steely male mind came up at breakfast.

"This is my first born, my wonderful, wonderful child who is so bright," she said. "One reason I can accept what she has done is that I do not see dramatic changes in her intellectual qualities acquired over a lifetime."

The daughter is uncomfortable. "Having done the steely bit," Deirdre McCloskey said, "I know where its cracks are, where its foolishnesses lie." And the mother replied: "Those are conclusions you could have come to as a man. It is a maturing process. I think that had you remained a man, you would have matured. You would have softened."

Deirdre McCloskey's thinking has indeed evolved. But it started long before she went full time as Deirdre in November 1995. Donald gave up tenure at Chicago and moved to Iowa in 1980 out of frustration that economic research at Chicago had become too focused on applied math and economic models that could prove any thesis, depending on the assumptions fed into the formulaic models.

Fame came to Donald McCloskey for "The Rhetoric of Economics," published in 1986, in which he argued that economics, for all its pretensions as a scientific discipline, is ultimately a conversation in which rhetoric—language—carries the argument. He also made a name for himself as a historian of the British economy by describing the measurable, "quantitative impact" of various forces and developments—a far cry from the abstract, mathematical modeling prevalent today. Women are better at quantitative research than men, Ms. McCloskey says.

But few if any female economists share the policy solution that Ms. McCloskey is now trying to give to feminist economics. While the women favor a government role to help make women more equal to men in the job market—child care subsidies, for example—Deirdre advocates a libertarian approach, drawing on beliefs that Donald first embraced as a young economist. Government is likely to make matters worse, Ms. McCloskey says. Better to rely on the virtues that shaped economic behavior in Adam Smith's day. Instead of just "prudence," which is another way of saying self-interest or profit the virtue she says men like so much—bring back four other woman-friendly virtues as motivating forces: love, courage, temperance, justice. She is writing a book on the subject.

Ms. Goldin, the Harvard economist and friend, is skeptical. Feminist economics has not produced concrete proposals, she says, and re-emphasizing the virtues is no exception. But Deirdre McCloskey persists. "You discover that no matter how you come at it mathematically, an economy takes place in a moral universe," she said. "That has been a big problem for economists to understand; they are so tied to prudence they don't regard other virtues as having anything to do with economics."

The Gay Megillah

By Gal Uchovsky

A trannie pop star setsTel Aviv on fire

Wednesday, June 23, 1999, The Village Voice: Features

Dana International is the darling of Eretz Y'Israel (she's even popular among the Orthodox).

Here is the new Israel in a glossy plastic nutshell. The following story does not sound real, but it happened just a few months ago. At an army base in charge of launching troops into Lebanese Hasbeya territory, a soldier came to his commanders and told them he felt trapped inside his male body and wanted to become a female. The commanders didn't hesitate to tell him: if that's what you want, no problem, you can become a female soldier. The next few months went by smoothly. The new soldier started wearing makeup and lipstick, and her commanders virtually forgot about her. That is, until the day she came back to them and said she now felt ready for the Operation. This was a little too much. The answer was: no operation during your service.

Has Israel gone crazy? Has the Holy Land become trannie heaven? The answer is more yes than no. It's not as perfect as this article may lead you to believe, but there's no denying the fact that most Israelis have recently accepted the option of transsexuality. Not that they would like their son to go through the process, but if someone else feels like doing it, it doesn't bother them. As a matter of fact, it's easier for them to accept the transgendered than to accept lesbians and gays. When the pop star Dana International goes on a talk show and starts to explain that she feels more like a gay man than like a Natural Woman, most people prefer not to get hung up on the details. She has breasts and long hair< that's enough for them.

They love her. Within three years Dana International has not only become one of the most popular singers in Israel (and well-known all over Europe), she has also played a major role in what might be called the Big Israeli Gay Megillah. After Dana's historic victory in the 1998 Eurovision Song contest, thousands of Tel Avivans stormed Rabin Square, where, overcome with national pride, they danced the night away, waving the Israeli flag side by side with the rainbow flag for the first time. This week, when Dana sings at the Gay Pride Festival, the first ever to be officially sponsored by a mayor of Tel Aviv, she will be performing in front of thousands of gays and straights in an event that represents a flamboyant new twist in the Zionist saga.

The new mayor of Tel Aviv is an example of this seismic shift in Israeli attitudes. Ten years ago, Ron Huldai was a cocky pilot who became the principal of a famous Tel Aviv high school after finishing his army service. Everyone predicted a rosy future for him in politics, since good-looking retired pilots are a very popular breed in Israel. But then Huldai gave an interview to a local paper in which he said, "Guys kissing< that's disgusting." That was a big mistake.

Ever since the mid '80s, gays and lesbians, scattered throughout the Israeli media, have been firing back at anyone who insults gay people. These are people who ordinarily take delight in bad-mouthing each other< most of them don't even talk to one another. But whenever there is an attack from outside, they fall in as brave soldiers and work directly or behind the scenes to ruin anybody who is a homophobe.

It took Huldai a week to start apologizing for his blunder. But even two years later, when he ran for the Labor primaries in Tel Aviv County, he learned that "those homoim" have a long memory. Huldai really tried. When his campaigners called up registered voters and came up against gay awareness, Huldai would personally call back, promising to become a gay-rights fighter.

It didn't get him elected to the Knesset, even after he met all the available gay activists in town. But two years later, when Huldai decided to run for mayor, he found one man who believed he had really changed. Adir Steiner is a sweet, intelligent young man. His longtime boyfriend, Doron Meizel, was a pioneer and a high officer in the army medical corps, who came out to his commanders in the late '70s. Meizel died of cancer a few years ago, and Steiner fought the army in order to become an "official widow" (which means a lot of money in Israel). He won.

Steiner decided to help Huldai's relationship with the gay community, which by then had become a test case for all of Huldai's liberal views. They were very successful together, and after Huldai's victory last November, Steiner was appointed municipal spokesman, the first openly gay official in the country.

After all this, it was not too hard to convince Huldai to endorse Tel Aviv's gay pride celebrations. For two weeks now, the city has been full of signs screaming "From Tel Aviv With Pride" (in Hebrew, pride< Ca'avah—rhymes with love—Cahavah< so it's even more dramatic). Of course Dana International will be at the center of these festivities.

A quick morning-pink flashback: Dana started as a fragile Yemenite boy from a poor background. When she decided to change her sex and become a singer, not one record company would sign her on. At the beginning of her career, even parts of the gay community resented her, arguing she was an obstacle to assimilation and yuppie boredom.

But Dana was determined, and, more important, talented and heartwarming. She has become such an icon in Israel that even ultra-Orthodox Knesset members no longer attack her (since she's popular even among some of their voters). It is difficult to explain to strangers why Dana is such great fun. But if you write to your congressman, she may get an American recording contract and show the Jerry Falwells that an Israeli trannie can be more than a woman—or at least more than a woman to me.

Gal Uchovsky is an openly gay Israeli talk show host and journalist living in Tel Aviv with his spouse, filmmaker Eytan Fox ("Florentine").

Girls will be boys

by Stephanie Nolen, The Globe and Mail

While the Nineties have seen drag queens become routine in the mainstream, the reverse—women performing or 'passing' as men—is just coming up from underground. For many, drag kings raise even more challenging questions about sex and masculinity.

STEPHANIE NOLEN, The Globe and Mail, Saturday, June 5, 1999

Toronto—Small, brunette, curvy, she gets out of the shower. She steps into boxer shorts, a suit, shiny loafers. She binds down her breasts. She straps a plastic dildo between her thighs. Painstakingly, she glues on sideburns and a goatee. She runs a comb through her hair one more time. Rebecca, the 26-year-old University of British Columbia science student, is gone. Looking back from the mirror is the lusty Mr. Bec, star performer at a Vancouver bar called Lotus, and incorrigible slickster.

Boys will be boys. And so, sometimes, will girls. All kinds of girls in Canadian cities are being boys, in fact—without the klieglight coronations reserved for drag queens, but with a curiosity and irreverence of equally royal proportions. Enter the drag kings.

The Woman-in-Men's-Clothing archetype is not new. It runs from Shakespeare's Rosalind to Joan of Arc to Virginia Woolf's Orlando, with innumerable folk tales of girls who don breeches for war or religious life along the way. But women have gained the right to participate fully in society without adopting disguise, and modern "drag," as we have known it, has been the domain of men.

Drag queens, all bouffants and inch-long lashes, have gone from gay club acts in the 1950s to mainstream-movie ubiquity in recent years, and spawned a library shelf full of books on the meaning of the queen. But gay women have done drag, too, with some butch lesbians making their ability to "pass" (as men) a point of pride. A few performed, but that tended to be behind closed doors and in small circles. They sure didn't advertise on flyers.

Now, however, they're making a scene. The Fabulous Drag Kings, a group of 10 Toronto women who perform as men to such songs as Great Balls of Fire and Sharp-Dressed Man, are booked solid for Gay Pride festivities in late June. Several Vancouver bars have regular shows, and women in both towns are making plans to travel to Columbus, Ohio, in October for the first-ever Drag King convention. Most of them are gay or bisexual women, but Clare (Flare) Smyth, one of the Fabulous Drag Kings, says more and more straight girls are getting into the king scene, too.

LaGrace Volcano's forthcoming book, The Drag King Book (Serpent's Tail Ltd., due in July), is an eye-candy collection of shots of cross-dressing women, from Elvis impersonators to serious suits, accompanied by an analytical text on the semiotics of drag kings by University of California professor Judith (Jack) Halberstam. Some of the women LaGrace Volcano photographs are clearly camping it up; others are just as clearly expressing a masculine persona intrinsic to their identity -- the two ends of the spectrum for female drag today. Either way, they are challenging images.

"When it comes to women in drag . . . it's the partial transformation -- the 'butch' woman—that's easier to take in stride, while the woman who seems completely plausible as a man calls into question our standards of masculinity," writes Holly Brubach, former style editor of the New York Times Magazine, in Girlfriend: Men, Women and Drag (Random House), released last month.

Western society treats femininity as predicated on artifice, Brubach argues, something that can be acquired with makeup and clothes. But "masculinity has been construed as 'natural,' inimitable, indomitable -- strictly the province of men. If a woman can convincingly simulate a man, then there must be something wrong with masculinity: it has failed to hold its ground; it has proven impotent in the face of a woman's raid on its demeanour and appearance."

LaGrace Volcano loves this stuff. Slight and soft-voiced, he savours the shock factor (while born in a female body, he prefers to be referred to as male). "Only people who have issues with their gender don't allow themselves to play with it," he insists. "We try to shoehorn everybody into either male or female and then police their gender; that has done untold psychic damage. I think cross-dressing should be taught in primary school."

Suzanne Carlstrom, 30, had her first experience with drag a few months ago, when she and a bunch of pals dressed up before a night on the town in Kingston. "It was wild, it was quite liberating," says Carlstrom of her transformation into Vince. "It was neat to see what happened to us. It gives you the freedom to be something that you're not."

Carlstrom was surprised to discover that night that she could just about pass (she borrowed her walk from the brothers and male cousins she grew up with). But her girlfriend was "quite freaked out" by Vince suddenly taking Suzanne's place. "He feels like someone else. But I'm interested in playing around with these ideas . . . of seeing yourself as a combination of all those different things rather than one."

FROM REBECCA TO MR. BEC IN SIX EASY STEPS

The first thing is hair. I've got to get that crested up, with gel or whatever. Then I put on sideburns and a goatee. I use real hair—it works the best (I know, I've tried it all). So every time I go to the hairdresser, I get them to save the clippings in a little bag.

I use white glue for the sideburns and spirit gum for around my mouth. You get faster the more you do it, but goatees are painstaking, it takes about half an hour. Sideburns are essential; they switch me over.

Then I put on a strap-on [a dildo] with a leather harness. It's important just to have something there, it would look weird [without] it. And it changes the whole way you move. Then men's boxers, pants, socks and shoes.

Then I bind. I'm not flat-chested. I'm a Ccup, so I use a tensor bandage, and then duct tape to hold it all together. It gets rid of the appearance of having breasts, and gives me the appearance of pecs. The binding makes my chest constricted, so I can't put my shoes on after I bind. It makes it hard to move around, but it doesn't hurt. But I can't breathe the whole way in, so when I'm performing, I'll [end up] panting.

Then I wear a men's undershirt, a shirt, a blazer—I have to be careful about what I put on because in a show I might be changing three times. If the number requires it, I'll put on chest hair, but generally I don't, because it's really itchy.

I use a paintbrush and eyeliner to fill in holes on the goatee. I went up to a Clinique makeup counter once and asked how I could get a more angular look to my cheeks. The woman who worked there showed me how. She was really nice—but I felt a little weird.

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